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preparation system, providing scenario-based federal and state planning options for multiple years and enabling professionals to easily input variables and view potential effects of life events and financial changes upon a client's future tax liabilities. The program's state planning capabilities include tax code information for residents of AZ, CA, CO, CT, GA, IL, IN, LA, MA, MD, MN, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR and WI, while a "generic state" is also included that can be customized to fit the conditions of non-included states. Planning for NYC/Yonkers is also supported. The Lacerte Tax Planner costs \$500, plus \$125 for annual maintenance. The annual cost to renew the program is only the annual maintenance cost, which is 25 percent of the package's current price.

Program Use/Data Entry — 5 Stars

Lacerte Tax Planner includes federal and resident state tax phase-outs, deduction rates, farm income averaging, contribution limits, AMT, passive gain/loss, alternative capital gains, self employment, statutory employee rules, lump-sum taxes, credits and other code for the states it supports, and includes an inflation estimation tool to aid in planning for deductions that are indexed by inflation. Non-resident income tax planning is not supported. The system is accessed from within the Lacerte Tax program, opening to a well-designed interface that provides easy access to data for multiple plans at the same time. The Lacerte Tax Planner can be accessed and used as a stand-alone application, as well. The user can select a client directly from the Lacerte Tax Planner or can easily select a client from the Client List in the Lacerte Tax system and transfer their current and proforma data to the planner, which opens when the user clicks the Planner icon. The client selection screen provides multiple sorting and filtering options, displaying client name, number, SSN, status and other details in a sortable spreadsheet view.

Within the Planner, the screen

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The program also includes a spreadsheet tool that allows the user to override data, carryover amounts and other details.

Data from clients already existing in the Lacerte Tax program automatically populates years for client years and appears as a plan in the client's records. The data-entry screens are spreadsheet-based, allowing copy and paste functions and showing up to 10 multiple-case scenarios for up to 10 years. Data entry is intuitive, giving the user variable levels of detail depending upon need. Changes to items that change fairly predictably, such as salary, can be made individually, or users can easily apply dollar or percentage increases across multiple years. Furthermore, the system provides simplified analysis for Case/Year, MFJ/MFS, general variable-based Differences and Adjustments. Users can drilldown from any tabbed view to worksheets and forms and, for review purposes, can attach notes to any data-entry field.

Reporting — 5 Stars

Several report templates are available in the Lacerte Tax Planner, or users can opt to create their own with the ability to add visual elements such as graphs, headers, footers and letterhead formatting. Report output options also include estimated tax payment forms, instruction letters and cover sheets, and allow the user to select the order in which documents print. Reports can be saved into PDF format for paperless document storage.

Import/Export

Capabilities — 3.5 Stars

As previously noted, the Lacerte Tax Planner integrates with Intuit's Lacerte 1040 tax system, with data automatically transferred. Reporting options allow export to PDF. The system does not offer integration or data import functions for other tax systems.

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ability, strong analysis functions, and simple navigation and data-entry processes make it a good fit for firms wishing to add tax planning services for their clients. With its direct integration with the tax system, it is best suited to those firms using Lacerte for tax preparation. While the initial cost of \$500 is about average for programs in this genre, the system's renewal cost is notably inexpensive, currently at only \$125 per year.

2007 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

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