Apr. 17, 2008

From the [April/May 2008 Review](#)
of Tax Compliance Suites

GoSystem Tax ES is widely viewed as the premier tax compliance system and is used by all of the Big 4 firms and most of the top 10. Although it originated as a CD-based product two decades ago, it evolved as an online program, which gives the benefit of automated updates and no maintenance. The program is geared toward larger practices and offers extensive formal review and multi-preparer functions, essential features for firms that provide compliance services to corporate clients and high net worth individuals with very complex tax situations. One of the core features that sets the system apart from many of the others is its tight integration with RIA's Checkpoint research platform and the other content available from Thomson.

All federal and state entity types are available as modules within GoSystem Tax ES, including 1040, 1120, 1120S, 1065, 1041, 706, 709, 990 and 5500, along with most municipal, country and special jurisdiction reporting requirements. Pricing varies depending on the specific entities, states and users. First year federal 1040 price starts at $2,500 and includes 706, 709, 1040, 1041, 1065, 1120/1120S, 5500, and 990). States are priced separately. Most firms are able to utilize GoSystem Tax ES for an affordable rate when selecting only the modules needed. In addition to GoSystem Tax ES, Thomson offers UltraTax CS, which is reviewed on page 24 of this issue.

General Operations/ Ease-of-Use — 4.5 Stars
The program can be used from any location where the professional has access to a high-speed connection, and opens through the web browser. The default interface

provides a simplified search-and-filter function for finding client returns,

additional options, including assignment of preparers, milestone creation and monitoring, time logs, document management information, and access to utilities and support. When a return is selected and opened, the program launches a subwindow
that appears very much like a traditional Windows-based program, providing icons and pull-down menus across the top, while a two-tabbed menu on the left gives access to a Client Organizer or a full list of Tax Forms available for that
type of entity.

GoSystem Tax ES offers both interview and form-based modes of data entry. Calculations
can be set to automatically process as data is entered, with information automatically
transferred between forms and schedules as necessary, including between associated forms and entities such as K-1 pass-throughs and parent/child returns. All fields with calculated or transferred data provide drilldown access to supporting worksheets
or schedules. Users can access a return summary or view a replica of the form (in addition to the form-based data-entry mode). They can also attach documents to client returns or add edit and review marks to any field. Access to various management functions is restricted to authorized users. GoSystem Tax ES is powerful but maintains an efficient and generally user-friendly atmosphere that is best utilized with some form of training.

Workflow & Productivity Tools — 5 Stars
As previously mentioned, GoSystem Tax ES offers an extensive feature set that is focused on firms with very complex client returns that require multiple professionals
to work on each. It provides exhaustive review-focused tools, including excellent

collaboration tools that allow multiple preparers/reviewers to access the return

powerful
diagnostics and security features, including a full-time audit trail and return
history function that monitors all return activity. Since the program is hosted
by Thomson, the company is also able to provide professional users with advanced
datamining capabilities that enable detailed searches and filtering across all
returns and datasets. Additionally, GoSystem Tax ES's web-based nature
gives professionals the ability to hold virtual meetings with clients, who can
access online data organizers, which then feed data directly into the compliance
system.

The system's integration with Checkpoint and TaxAlerts for research functions
is very valuable for managing complex clients and for keeping abreast of tax
legislation and code that may affect them. In addition to not having to perform
program updates or maintain large IT infrastructure for the program, which lessens
the burden on the IT department, the online system's anywhere/anytime
accessibility can also help ensure business continuance in the case of a disaster
or other interruption.

Integration/ Import & Export — 5 Stars
Through integration with Thomson's CS Professional Suite of accounting
products (asset management, trial balance and engagement), GoFileRoom for
document
management, and Checkpoint for research, GoSystem Tax ES fits well within a
high-end workflow environment. The program can export returns and other
documents
directly to bookmarked PDFs, and users can attach Word and Excel files to client
returns. It can also import from various third-party programs, including trial
balance and asset management systems.

Support/Training & Help System — 5 Stars

Relative Value — 4.5 Stars

As client returns grow more complex and require more eyes on them both during preparation and review processes, advanced review and collaboration tools become a must, and those offered within the web-based GoSystem Tax ES are the most powerful available, providing strong security, due-diligence checklists, a myriad of review marks and notes, and final approval processes prior to filing. The system is exquisite in design and function, and is a brute when it comes to capabilities. And it is priced as such, making it best-suited to larger practices or others who process very complex client returns.

2008 Overall Rating: 5 Stars

CPA Practice Advisor is registered with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) as a sponsor of continuing professional education on the National Registry of CPE Sponsors.