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Business Accounting Systems*

A-Systems has been producing construction accounting software programs since the late 1970s. The company has since developed an accounting system called Visual Bookkeeper, which is geared for general small business use, providing tightly integrated GL, AP, AR, payroll, checkwriting, inventory and basic fixed asset management functions, along with sales orders, purchase orders, point-of-sale, contact management, cash flow management and full reporting. The program's inventory module includes options for FIFO, LIFO, average costing, standard cost and serialized inventory. The system is available in two versions: Small Business Advantage and Preferred, with the Preferred option providing enhanced financial management capabilities and greater support for managing any number of companies and cost centers. Visual Bookkeeper costs \$995 for a single-user version; \$100 for additional concurrent users.

**Ease of Use/Basic Functionality — 4.5 Stars**

As with most small business accounting systems, Visual Bookkeeper was designed with user friendliness as a key concern. Over the years, the developers have successfully managed to keep this ease of use while expanding the system's features to include all of the functions necessary for managing a modern small business. During initial setup or creation of additional new businesses to be managed through the system, Visual Bookkeeper provides a new company setup wizard

that guides the user through the various processes and offers template charts of accounts. The program's primary interface provides icons for accessing the core accounting areas of the system, including AR, AP, GL, payroll and others, and also offers overview screens, a.k.a. "dashboards," for each

of these areas and for the business as a whole. This provides management with

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for date entries and smart entry field options. Task-related Help options are readily available. Visual Bookkeeper includes several features that essentially act as “safety nets,” helping to prevent users from making mistakes.

One of these is automatic data backup, which cannot be turned off and ensures the integrity of the system. Additionally, the system alerts users to potential errors when posting receipts and invoices.

Throughout the program, Visual Bookkeeper provides intuitive screens and workflow processes that should require little training, while also making sure that transactions are posted correctly and accounts are properly maintained.

### **Core Accounting/Security Functions — 4.5 Stars**

Visual Bookkeeper offers a strong set of key financial management modules that include GL, AP, AR, transaction journals, payroll, sales and inventory. Plus, GAAP-based double-entry accounting ensures accuracy of the company's books. The program's GL offers the ability to create financial statements in multiple user-defined formats, while the payables section provides 1099 support and the receivable component allows trade invoicing. Both editions include payroll, which allows multiple states and supports benefits management, union pay and customized deductions, with wage reporting forms included. Users of the program can download tax tables from the A-Systems website. Visual Bookkeeper also provides basic contact management functions and offers sortable, filterable client and vendor lists.

Since A-Systems is an expert in construction accounting software, it makes sense that its JobView program also provides excellent job and equipment costing options. The system's inventory capabilities are especially strong for

an entry-level SMB accounting package, enabling users to track multi-part and

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The overview screens in Visual Bookkeeper give users a good snapshot of key numbers in each of a business' financial areas, from AR and AP to inventory, sales and account balances. Users can also drilldown to transactions and other detailed data. The program provides good forecasting, cash flow management and projection tools, while an included report engine allows customization of dozens of pre-built reports that include full and consolidated financials, period comparisons, aging reports, customer lists, transactions, purchasing and inventory. Customized reports can be saved into a 'favorites' lists, allowing users to quickly pull data and view on-screen or print. Wage and 1099 reporting forms are also included in the program.

### **Import/Export/Integration — 4 Stars**

All of the modules within Visual Bookkeeper operate seamlessly with each other, and the program includes a data import utility that can pull account and customer/vendor information from QuickBooks. Reports can be saved to PDF, Excel and plain text formats. Remote web-based access is not available, but a PDA synching tool is offered.

### **Help & Support Options — 4 Stars**

The program is very easy to use, providing intuitive processes and transaction screens while also offering many assistive features that include task-specific Help and built-in video tutorials. A basic accounting training course is also included on the installation disk. The company's support website includes program updates, tax tables and program FAQs. After initial installation, support options include one-time and subscription-based plans.

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