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QuickBooks
is to small business accounting as Microsoft is to operating systems or the iPod is to portable music. By far the dominant vendor in the space, Intuit offers several general versions of QuickBooks, starting with Simple Start and moving up into the more comprehensive Pro, Premier and Enterprise Solutions, along with QuickBooks Online and QuickBooks for Mac. The Premier line also comes in variations designed for specific industries, including contractors, retailers, professional services, manufacturing, nonprofits and the QuickBooks Premier Accountant Edition, which is reviewed here.

The Accountant Edition includes all of the general program features of the Pro version, such as GL, AP, AR, sales management, customer and vendor management,
and check writing. But it adds functions specific to client service needs, including a data exchange utility for working with client files, budgeting and forecasting capabilities, and advanced financial reporting, reconciliation and planning tools. QuickBooks Premier Accountant Edition costs $399.95 for a single-user license or $1,099.95 for a three-user license, and is available at major retailers or from the Intuit website.

LEARNING CURVE & EASE OF USE-
For 2010, Intuit has added several notable functions to Premier, including a new App Center, where users can select from a collection of web-based tools from third-party vendors. Other new features include an improved Company Snapshot

overview screen, a dramatically redesigned report center, and Intuit Check Solutions

users quickly jump to specific functions. The program also offers pull-down menus and an icon task bar at the top of the screen for accessing other areas, including the Company Snapshot, a user-customizable dashboard that can be set to show graphical summaries of key business data, such as account balances, period comparisons, income and expense trends, and sales data.

Customer, vendor and employee lists are organized in Centers for each of these groups with selection screens offering quick access to data, such as AR balances for clients, and with the ability to drilldown into transactions. Lists can be searched, filtered or sorted by numerous methods. While on customer or vendor data screens, users can also attach scanned documents or other files, such as invoices or expense receipts, or access reporting options specific to that entity. This document management feature is available as an option through Intuit's Connected Services, through which the file is stored online, allowing access by clients or firm staff. Likewise, the Employee Center and employee data screens offer similar functionality, with the ability to attach misc information, track employee time, manage HR or payroll data, and access reports.

Throughout QuickBooks Premier Accountant Edition, data entry is aided by multiple smart features, including self-populating selection lists for clients, account data, inventory or service items, job categories, and other items, while also providing the ability to drilldown from virtually any point into detailed views of transactions and histories.

Specific to accountant client service needs, Premier offers the Client Data Review feature, which aids in analyzing and adjusting client data. The program also has an Accountant's Copy feature, enabling accountants to access, open and make necessary adjustments to prior period client records without disrupting

the client's access to the current period. Premier continues to offer

customized
financial sets, including BS P&Ls, Statement of Cash Flow, comparisons, and other reports. In the Accountant Edition, all reports, statements and other output can be e-mailed from the program or saved into Excel, Word and PDF formats.

INTEGRATION, IMPORT/EXPORT-

One of the greatest productivity tools with the Accountant Version of Premier is that, since most small businesses use their own versions of QuickBooks, data can be easily transferred into the system for reviewing, correcting errors or other client service. The system also provides direct integration with Intuit's ProSeries and Lacerte tax applications. A wide array of add-on products can also be found on the Intuit Marketplace. (For more information on QuickBooks add-ons, see Doug Sleeter's column at www.CPATechAdvisor.com/go/2603).

SUPPORT, TRAINING & HELP SYSTEM-

Intuit has added an Express Install option during initial setup, while several wizards also assist with configuration and performing specific tasks within the program, such as reporting and payroll. Premier's Home screen includes easy access to the QuickBooks Coach, which offers tutorials, tips and options for training. In addition to extensive in-program Help functions, online support options include a live user community, an abundant library of articles and how-tos, as well as access to the Online Backup Center.

RELATIVE VALUE-

QuickBooks Premier Accountant Edition continues to offer outstanding functionality for professionals who provide accounting services to small business clients. Through excellent integration, data sharing, interactive tools and go-anywhere drilldown functionality, the system helps accountants be more efficient in their

client service and management tasks, while also enabling greater management

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