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From the April/May 2010 Issue

As you may have noticed, a few things have changed with our review of professional tax preparation systems this year. In his column in this issue, Executive Editor Darren Root, CPA.CITP, explains the rationale for these changes, along with the benefits we believe they will provide you, our readers.

LOOKING FORWARD
One of the key changes you'll notice is that there are now two separate review categories for professional tax preparation systems: Advanced Workflow and Traditional Workflow. While it may not be obvious to you, the reader, we have also implemented a more rigorous review category/subcategory rating structure along with the addition of 1/4-star increments in our ratings.

While reviews are inherently opinion-based, we've taken steps to add some measure of objectivity to this subjective process. Each product in a review will continue to be scored on several key areas of its functionality, but how a program scores in each of these areas will be based on several subsections. This new grading formula will help ensure that each product is graded on the same critical functions. The chart on this page outlines each of the sections/subsections for this review genre so you have a clear picture of how the ratings were determined.

In general, the changes in the tax compliance reviews are intended to better differentiate between the types of tax programs based on the workflow and collaboration tools that they offer. The differentiation between the two review categories (Advanced Workflow and Traditional Workflow) is necessary because firms have

very different needs and levels of expectation that often depend on their internal

- - Paperless creation
  - Digital Document Storage/Management
  - Data Import/Output
- **Integration**
  - w/in software publisher's suite
  - w/other or external programs
- **Help/Support**
  - Online resource center
  - Tech assistance availability
  - Downloadable system updates
  - US-based live support staff
- **Summary & Pricing**
- **Overall Rating**

This particular review section focuses on professional tax preparation systems that are geared toward practices with traditional workflow needs. The review of products designed for practices with advanced internal workflow processes is also in this issue and online here. Once again, the differentiation between these groups isn't necessarily reflective of how many staff a practice has, whether or not they manage complex clients or the volume of returns they process. Rather, it is based on paperless workflow needs, remote access capabilities and other factors.

Specific features and functions that were expected from the products in this review, at least at a basic level, included the availability of add-on modules for functions such as write-up and other professional needs, as well as the level of integration between those modules and the tax suite.

Another key area regarded workflow processes, notably the ability to save returns to paperless formats and manage them, along with other digital client documents in client folders. Scanning has become an integral part of the tax engagement, so scan-and-populate functions were also assessed, along with whether or not the program enabled auto-population of client data from scanned forms.

For more detailed information on these and other changes to our review formats, please see the intro

of products designed for practices with Advanced Workflow

a comprehensive system for managing client return compliance throughout the engagement process. New enhancements for the TY 2009 season included integration with CCH's IntelliConnect research platform, which allows users to easily search all content with results lists that are also searchable and easily formatted. Other new features include automatic updates, Sch. D import of brokerage statements and enhanced client organizers.
Read Full
Review

CCH Small Firm Services – TaxWise

The TaxWise professional tax compliance system offered
by CCH Small Firm Services is specifically designed for high-volume retail
tax preparation firms. Available in several bundled options, TaxWise gives
firms a comprehensive system for managing all tax types. It provides management
tools for running multiple locations along with options for paperless
workflow, bank products, credit card payment, billing management and tax
planning. New features include enhanced client organizers, automatic system
updates and integration with the CCH IntelliConnect research platform.
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Review

Drake Software – Drake Tax

Drake Software offers an all-in-one tax practice suite that includes professional
compliance, practice management, web-based tools for multi-office
management, tax planning, write-up and business development tools. New for
the TY 2009 season, the company enhanced paperless management functions,
streamlined data-entry tasks, added a new debit card disbursement option, and
added client payroll portals to its write-up module. .

tools for future tax seasons. In this review, we have rated the program based on the capabilities and features it had when reviewed, but being new-to-market, we've also included discussion of Intuit's anticipated developments of the product. As a web-based system, it can be used with either PCs or Mac computers.

Intuit – ProSeries

The ProSeries professional tax compliance suite has long been popular with small and mid-sized practices, offering several bundled editions of the system under Basic and Professional versions, as well as a pay-per-return option. New features for the TY 2009 season included the addition of unlimited e-filing as a standard component; enhanced online training; a new ProSeries Plus Add-On Solution bundle that includes client checklists, client presentation features and client advisor functions; as well as integration with ProLine Tax Research, which was developed in conjunction with BNA. ProSeries supports Windows XP, Vista and Windows 7.

Orange Tax Suite Pro

While Orange Door, Inc. isn't yet a name that every professional recognizes, the company's Orange Tax Suite Pro has been around since TY 2006, offering a completely web-based professional tax compliance system. New for TY 2009, Orange Door has added client portals and online document storage functions, as well as web-based client organizers that integrate with the tax package for data entry. The system also includes

multi-office/location management tools, along with review-based workflow

of various business and other entities. In the 2009 version, the company introduced several new features, including the ability to add tick marks throughout the system, an audit trail for form entries on 1040 page 1 and page 2, the ability to lock completed returns, greater automation of multi-state returns and multi-office management tools.
Read Full
Review

TaxSlayer Pro Premium

The TaxSlayer line of professional tax preparation software was initially developed by a tax and financial services company, but has grown over the past 20 years to become a popular choice among many firms. The system is available in two bundled formats, with the Classic version offering the core tax compliance options for all entities, and the Premium version adding additional practice management and workflow features.
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Review

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2010 Review of Advanced Workflow Tax Compliance Systems

For reviews of additional professional tax compliance systems, please see the this review category.
Read Full
Review

BNA Software – 706 Preparer & 709 Preparer

BNA is widely known for its research solutions, offering

2010 Review of Advanced Workflow Tax Prep Systems — Comparison Chart