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From the April/May 2010 Review of [Small Business Accounting Systems \(Locally Installed\)](#).

A-Systems

Corporation has been providing quality software products since 1978. Starting as a construction accounting software vendor, A-Systems eventually expanded its line of products to include a general accounting product called Visual Bookkeeper, which is reviewed here. Though in direct competition with industry giants such as QuickBooks and Peachtree, A-Systems offers its customers a more personalized, customized product. New features in version 10 include enhanced DataView functionality, a widely enhanced payroll module, and numerous updates in the GL module.

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS:

Installation of Visual Bookkeeper was quick and problem free. The user interface is both easy on the eyes and on user sensibilities. A drop-down menu at the top provides access to all system modules along with management and setup activities.

To the left of the screen is a vertical menu with icons representing modules.

One of the first things new users will notice is that all of the data-entry screens are very similar in appearance and functionality, with numerous tabs designed to provide easy access and quick entry of data. Fields contain lookup options and the ability to attach documents to the record. Data entry is performed using the batch system, allowing users to review data prior to posting. Company setup is simplified using the new Company Setup Wizard, and several other wizards are also available in various areas of the software, including chart of accounts setup and new vendor setup. Visual Bookkeeper does not currently provide industry-

specific

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functionality is set up in the AR module and is easily tracked. To review totals, users simply run the Sales Tax Summary report.

Visual Bookkeeper is very 'accountant' friendly, containing a powerful audit trail function that cannot be turned off. As a result, every transaction entered in the program is tracked and can be reproduced. Visual Bookkeeper does not offer multi-currency functionality at this time. The program is easily networked for multiple users, and transactions can be created at one location, exported, emailed and imported at the business' headquarters to support multiple locations. The company noted that some users have set the program up as a hosted application on their own server and allow remote access to other users/locations.

DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS:

Users can convert customer quotes directly into sales orders. In turn, those orders can be easily converted to an invoice. The optional point-of-sale module offers a cash sales function allowing users to enter cash sales by scanning a product or entering a product description. Visual Bookkeeper offers three menu views: Sale Menu, Drawer Menu and Gift Card Menu. Each menu offers different options at the bottom of the screen. Credit card payments can also be accepted over the Internet utilizing Mercury Payment Systems. At this time, does not provide does not provide direct integration with shipping vendors for printing FedEx or UPS shipping documents.

The contact manager function allows effortless tracking of customer activity and information. Users can choose preferences for each customer including status, whether they are active or inactive or on credit hold, and their credit limit. Vendor information, including tax number, payment terms and numerous user-

defined

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statements

and other reports can be converted to a PDF file, emailed to recipients, or exported as a text file. Data from reports may also be exported directly into spreadsheets, word processors, CSV files, or saved as raw data for import into other programs, such as databases. E-payment and e-banking capabilities within the product are limited to the ability to process EFT transactions, built-in credit card processing and reconciliation, direct deposits, and bank downloads for bank reconciliation in both Microsoft Money and QuickBooks formats.

MANAGEMENT FEATURES:

The Overview screens display general statistical information, AP and AR overviews, and a financial overview. An accounting overview displays GL totals along with current AP and AR status. The GL Projections/Modeling function allows users to enter data into Visual Bookkeeper to create an accurate cash flow projection, along with sales and expenses for up to a three year time frame.

The built-in Report Generator is one of Visual Bookkeeper's most valuable features. Reports can be easily created, modified and processed. Visual Bookkeeper offers numerous standard reports in each module or the ability to create custom reports from scratch using the optional Dataview module — just click on a module, choose a report and modify by choosing new report criteria.

Visual Bookkeeper security is multi-level, and can be implemented at the business, user, or module level, as needed. A paperless office green solution was added that allows scanned files, spreadsheets, documents, photos, etc. to be attached at a long list of appropriate places, and accessed through a centralized “electronic file cabinet.”

INTEGRATION/IMPORT/EXPORT:

All invoices, statements and reports can be exported to PDFs, as well as to

spreadsheet programs such as Excel, word processing programs such as Word, or

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Visual Bookkeeper includes Bean Counting 101, a lighthearted but comprehensive manual for non-accountants who will be using the program. The “search for help on” function allows users to search for answers on specific topics. The live update wizard will automatically download any system updates, and all payroll tax tables are updated and available free of charge to customers. Online product training allows users to choose from various training topics that can be downloaded and accessed when convenient. Visual Bookkeeper offers technical support agreements that provide toll-free support, as well as access to the support hotline.

SUMMARY & PRICING

Visual Bookkeeper is currently available for \$79.95 for a single-user system and includes the core GL, AP, AR, Sales and Payroll modules. Originally evolved from the vendor's excellent JobView job costing software, Visual Bookkeeper continues to offer a wide variety of useful features that small businesses need, all the while remembering who their customers are. This is a solid product that users will not outgrow anytime soon.

2010 OVERALL RATING:

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