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The Intuit ProLine Lacerte Tax Planner is a tool for developing customized tax scenarios to help tax and accounting professionals estimate the tax impact of proposed future transactions. The planner allows tax professionals to advise clients on how best to minimize tax liabilities using known and projected tax rates, rules, income and familial issues by modifying the substance and timing of proposed transactions. The program is available as a stand-alone system, but is generally used as an add-on to the Lacerte tax preparation system. Using Lacerte Tax Planning, firms can easily prepare multiple year tax scenarios based on both current and inflation-adjusted future income levels.

Basic System Functions

The tax planning system installs along with the compliance suite and is accessible via that program's main icon toolbar. Tax Planner then opens into a new window that generally keeps the same Lacerte interface and navigation components, including tabbed screens for moving between a summary screen and data-entry screens for tax preparation categories for income, adjustments, deductions/exemptions, tax, credits, other taxes and payments. The summary screen offers a collapsible menu on the left for accessing planner worksheets for federal and state scenarios, along with a main work area that shows calculated data in spreadsheet format, with the ability to drill down to underlying data.

When working with a client file that already exists in the tax preparation system, data is automatically populated into the Lacerte Tax Planner, and can be edited as necessary for planning purposes. If creating a new client, the information can be manually entered into worksheets. The system also includes a Watch List and Diagnostics functions, which are shown on the summary screen and alert users to potential conflicts or missing data. Both the planning and preparation systems can

be networked and offer multi-user access, with client selection screens that offer

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plan options and entering taxpayer, spouse and dependent information. Types of planning available include MFS/MFJ comparisons, difference analysis, adjustment analysis and case/year analysis, with the option to group columns by year or single base year. Lacerte Tax Planner includes all federal tax rates, rules and phase outs, along with the code for AZ, CA, CO, CT, GA, IL, IN, LA, MD, MA, MN, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR, and WI. A custom worksheet can be used for other states or local tax planning.

The program allows creation of up to 10 multiple case tax scenarios for up to 10 years each, with customization options allowing copying of column data, the addition of notes to client data, and custom worksheets. Users are able to compare multiple, complex scenarios using actual current and future tax rates, with an inflation projection tool that helps account for potential or likely changes to phase-out limits, AMT and other factors. Intuit ProLine Lacerte Tax Planner calculates for AMT, alternative capital gains, phase-outs, farm income averaging, self-employment and lump-sum taxes, and contribution limits. 4.75

Reporting

Several customizable report templates are available, including federal and state summaries, one-page summaries, adjustments, deductions and letters, with the ability to select specific worksheets and control the ordering of the documents. Reports can be output individually or in batch. Client deliverable reports can include graphs and other visual elements using the built-in report writer features. Client letters and reports can be viewed on-screen prior to printing, or can be saved to PDF format or directly to the Lacerte Document Management System, which includes electronic client correspondence utilities such as emailing directly from the system. 4.5

Import/Export/Integration

As previously noted, the planning system integrates directly with the Lacerte DMS

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traditional Help index. Extensive online support features include a digital support assistant, knowledgebase, a user community, how-tos, support videos and chat support. Live, phone-based technical support is included with the tax package. 5

Summary & Pricing

The Intuit ProLine Lacerte Tax Planner provides features for easily producing up to 10 years of plans and comparing multiple complex scenarios. The system is best-suited to users of the Lacerte tax program, and costs \$690 for the first year, with an annual maintenance fee of \$140 for renewal years.

2010 Overall Rating 4.5

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