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www.lacertesoftware.com

From the October 2012 [review of professional tax planning systems](#).

Best Fit: Although Lacerte Tax Planner can be used independently, integration and automated features make it even more valuable to firms using the broader tax preparation system.

Strengths

- Intuitive interface and user-friendly navigation
- Direct integration with Lacerte Tax 1040
- Integration with Document Management System
- Customizable graphical reporting

Potential Limitations

- Output limited to PDF and text formats
- Does not include rates for all income taxing states

Lacerte Tax Planner provides planning, analysis and client presentation tools for projecting individual income taxes for clients out to as many as 10 years with 10 scenarios each. It includes past, current and projected rates for federal taxation, as well as for 17 states and New York City, and a generic worksheet for other states and local taxes.

The planning system comes bundled with the Lacerte Tax Analyzer and the Lacerte Document Management System, but is at its best when also used with the main tax preparation system.

Basic System Functions: 4.75 Stars

Lacerte Tax Planner can be used to manage any number of clients and supports any

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The program offers a plan information panel that acts as both the starting point for creating new plans, as well as the entry to existing ones, providing additional tabs for determining the years of projections to be planned, how many scenarios per year, and for entering basic client and dependent data.

An icon toolbar at the top of the screen offers additional navigation options, with access to plan information, data import functions, reporting, creating new scenarios. If used in conjunction with the Lacerte Document Management System, an icon offers quick access to that utility.

During data entry and scenario testing, users can view and enter information at a summary, top-level view, which quickly shows the effects of changes to income, status, exemptions and other variables. For more detailed data entry, they can drill down to specific worksheets. In both cases, all calculations are automatically performed and displayed in real time.

The program's Watch List and Diagnostics features remain on screen, the first providing summary totals for fields the user wants to watch, such as AMT or total tax. The diagnostics feature alerts users to overrides, carryover amounts, missing data and potential conflicts.

Core Tax Planning Features: 4.5 Stars

As noted previously, the program can be used to create as many as 10 scenarios per year for up to 10 years, and includes tools for automatically determining the optimal deductions, exemptions and the effects of AMT, alternative capital gains tax, retirement and lump sum distributions on a client's liability.

Lacerte Tax Planner includes four types of standard analyses: A year/case analysis, difference analysis, Married Filing Jointly versus Married Filing Separately comparison, and adjustment analysis.

The system includes all past, current and projected federal tax laws and rates,

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Reporting: 4.5 Stars

The system's reporting functions are accessed from the top icon menu, with options for federal and state summaries, one-page summaries, lists of adjustments and deductions, and client letter templates. Customization options extend to all components of reports and letters, including headers, footers, displayed data and other information, and graphs can be added using a simple built-in tool.

All reports and letters can be viewed on-screen, printed or saved to PDF format for digital document management or distribution. Since the planning system comes bundled with the Lacerte Document Management System, users can also store client plans digitally.

Import/Export/Integration: 4.25 Stars

Lacerte Tax Planner has direct integration with the primary tax compliance system, as well as with the document management, tax analyzer and research modules. It can import client data from QuickBooks, Quicken, Excel and common formats, but output options are limited to PDF and text-based formats.

Help/Support: 5 Stars

The tax planning program includes many assistive features, including a traditional help utility with right-click menu access to task-specific help, tips and access to an online user community. Intuit also provides several online support resources, including a knowledgebase, digital support assistant, how-tos, product documentation, videos, access to training options and chat-based support. Live support is included with the tax package, but not if the planning system is used as a stand-alone.

Summary & Pricing

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