Accountants (QBO4A) multi-client tool for accountants using the application, provide a capable cloud-based platform for managing small business finances for multiple organizations.

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Basic System Functions

QBO is generally a forms-oriented application with a wide range of capabilities. The application is oriented around "centers," which provide direct access into the management of customers, vendors, employees. Most accounting is done under the tabs for transactions, reports, and sales tax.

The Accountant version of the application, known as QuickBooks Online for Accountants (QBOA) is robust, and has an Accountant Center which lists key tools for bookkeeping and accounting. This menu includes tools for reclassifying transactions, access to key tools like account reconciliation, closing the books as of a specific date, and void/deleted transaction reports. QBOA does not include a good interface for batch data entry of transactions, although there is less of a need to enter transactions directly due to the application's support for batch import of transactions and direct integration with thousands of US financial institutions.The product does not have a data entry screen which is designed for the quick entry of limited details related to multiple transactions (e.g. data from check stubs). This keeps bookkeepers performing traditional write-up services from being able to perform fast, keyboard-only, heads-down data entry on multiple transactions.

Intuit is in the process of rolling out an attractive new user interface for QBO and QBOA which will be similar to the new tabbed design released in QuickBooks 2014. Because of this transition, current QBO users will require some time to adjust to the new menus, resulting in some initial frustration for long time users. The similar

is not an easy way to group accounts, customize formatting, and automatically update presentation quality financial statements. The reporting engine for operational reports has been updated, and gives users the ability to modify and memorize reports in a variety of ways. The new user interface has some key financial metrics on a dashboard and a customizable snapshot report, but the reporting tools are not as flexible as the tools available in the QuickBooks desktop application. The reporting tool does not support consolidated or combined financial statements natively, although one might be able to create consolidated financials by using a traditional engagement management application (e.g. ProSystem *fx* Engagement, Engagement CS, Caseware Working Papers, etc.)

Integration and Import/Export

As mentioned earlier, QBO offers direct integration and automated import of transactions from most financial institutions. For the few banks which are not accessible by QBO, Intuit has a web connect tool in QBO Plus which can be used to import transactions stored in a supported file type (QFX, QBO, or OFX). A number of transaction import tools are also available through the Intuit Apps Marketplace for an additional fee.

The Intuit Apps Marketplace offers a wide range of applications to meet the needs of businesses, including CRM, inventory management, data import, and billing/invoicing. Third party cloud data integration applications (also called "digital plumbing" providers) like ITDuzzit, Zapier, and OneSaas are also available for automating the entry of data between QBO and other applications. Intuit has attempted to create a platform where developers can write apps for both the desktop and online versions of the application simultaneously. Software limitations on the desktop application have made the process of having one set of add-ons for all QuickBooks applications (e.g. both the on-premises and online solutions) more of a dream than a reality at this time.

Help and Support

clients/end users from within the ProAdvisor website.

Summary and Pricing

QuickBooks Online and QuickBooks Online for Accountants are respectable solutions for small businesses and the accounting professionals who serve them, but are not as robust as the related on-premises solutions in QuickBooks Accountant and other on-premises versions of the product.

Client fees for QuickBooks Online range from $12.95/month per company for the limited Simple Start version to $39.95 per month per company for QuickBooks Online Plus. A wide range of payroll options are available from Intuit and many other providers. Integrated add-ons solutions are available online at apps.intuit.com, and are priced separately. The QuickBooks Online for Accountants application, as well as the QBO ProAdvisor Program are free for accountants with multiple paying customers, and the free membership includes training and a ProAdvisor certification exam for QBO. More information is available at the Intuit Accountants website, accountants.intuit.com.

Strengths

- Extensive ecosystem of add-on applications through the apps.intuit.com platform, and tight bank/credit card integration for data import from financial institutions.
- Large base of users who are familiar with the desktop version of the application, including most paraprofessionals who took bookkeeping courses in the last 15 years.
- Includes tools for importing data from the desktop version of QuickBooks, as well as the import of standing data using preformatting spreadsheets.
- Cloud platform reliability has improved significantly over the last three years as Intuit migrated hosting to new data centers.

- Strong multi-client capabilities with the free QuickBooks Online for Accountants

plan ($39.95/mo)
- Many common business needs require users to subscribe to additional services (e.g. Mavenlink CRM, SOS Inventory, SmartVault, Exact Online, etc.)
- The user interface for both the desktop version of QuickBooks (Pro, Premier) and QBO have been changed to make the user interface for the two platforms more similar in 2013. The applications are developed and maintained by different product teams, resulting in different implementations of similar features.
- The product is due for some reporting enhancements in 2014, including a more robust report writer. The popular QuickBooks Statement Manager tool for creating financial statements in Excel does not work with QBO.
- Intuit's cloud-based suite of applications for accounting and tax professionals (e.g. Intuit Tax Online, QBO, QBO4A, Intuit Online Payroll) does not include a platform for making tax-only adjustments, a fixed asset and depreciation solution, a workpaper management tool, or a portal solution.

Best Fit

QuickBooks Online will most likely prove to be successful for many service-based small businesses and their accountants, as well as those who need a robust ecosystem of available add-on applications. The QBO ecosystem has a number of limitations, however, and may not meet the needs of manufacturers, contractors, those who handle multiple currencies, and larger organizations who require more than a handful of profit centers.

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