CPA
Practice**Advisor**

It's no secret that the construction industry is one of the industries hardest hit by the past recession. The U.S. Department of Commerce states that residential construction in March of 2011 is down 8% from March of 2010. Non-residential and commercial construction is even worse, with a 10% decrease in new construction. The good news is that construction-related activity increased from February to

March of 2011. Even so, many experts agree that with the glut of existing homes on

servicing modules, and estimating/project management capability.

So now where do we go? Several of the products reviewed here have turned to mobile communications and devices, a logical choice in an industry where the majority of employees are seldom in an office. Being able to remotely communicate with field offices, service technicians and even customers, is rapidly becoming a necessity, particularly in the construction industry. And while the core products may remain basically the same, the increase in mobile communication capability and remote access offered by software vendors makes complete sense.

In this review, the products vary widely, from out-of-the box entry-level construction products to top-line, comprehensive construction and contractor products that offer everything from in-depth financial capability to the ability to access the system from anywhere, to color-coded service boards that track service calls and technicians in the field.

The following sections and criteria were used for this product review:

Basic System Functions, such as ease of use, customization capability, multi-location and remote access capability, as well as the platform(s) supported.

Core Accounting Capabilities takes a look at four main core modules: GL, AP, AR and Payroll, along with the availability of additional accounting modules, as well as audit trail functionality and user security.

Construction/Contractor-Specific Features include the availability of staples such as estimating, project management, change order processing, and inventory and purchasing tools. It also focuses on features specifically related to contractors such as dispatch and scheduling, equipment management and integration with GPS devices.

Reporting and Management Tools looks at various reporting options, alerts and

While each product is rated based on these criteria, the final rating is not necessarily indicative of the quality of the product. It's true that a small construction company with less than five employees may not need a five-star product loaded with a lot of features that likely will never be used. The needs of your client take precedence over the features available in the products reviewed. But in certain circumstances, a top-line product may be exactly what they need. Only you and you client can determine that.