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Software Technology, Inc. ' PracticeMaster

PracticeMaster and Tabs3 from Software Technology, Inc. work together to deliver a viable solution for small to mid-sized firms. Tabs3 handles time tracking, billing, AR and reporting, and PracticeMaster provides calendaring, scheduling and contact management.

FEATURES – 4 Stars

Tabs3 setup covers client, staff, task code and various validation lists. Among other items, client records contain one contact (more can be set up in PracticeMaster), billing type (area of services), billing frequency/group, primary, secondary and originating timekeepers, payment allocation method, fee and expense rate table, bill rate level, client hourly rate, threshold billing items, courtesy discount, services, statement options, and budget hours and amount. Staff may have up to six current billing rates or a custom rate table for each engagement. Tabs3 supports a rate table for each client. Optionally, a firm can set up Timekeeper Profitability Amounts, which are monthly overhead cost amounts for each staff person. Task Codes include long descriptions, an effective date, a flat amount, and current and new bill rates.

To clients, PracticeMaster adds a calendar, journal or communications center for timer records, phone call records, e-mail messages, research records and client notes records, attached documents, and more. One strong PracticeMaster feature is its graphical calendars/scheduling. Days, weeks and months can be color-coded for appointments, tasks and other events. Individual, group and firm-wide calendars as well as calendars side-by-side may be displayed. Utilizing Calendar Plan Templates, users can define their own tickler plan that automatically calculates deadlines, due dates and checklists.

Time can be entered in Tabs3 or PracticeMaster using a standard entry form. Hours

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demand and progress bill. Billing notes and instructions can be defined per client. Split-fee billing is also available, allowing firms to bill several clients a percentage of fees and/or costs for a project. Users can edit, reprint or unbill a billing statement at any time.

INTEGRATION – 5 Stars

Tabs3 and PracticeMaster both integrate with Palm PDAs. Tabs3 exports client, timekeeper, tasks and category lookups to a handheld. Hot-synching merges entries back into Tabs3. PracticeMaster exports client, contact, calendar and other information to a Palm's Address Book, Date Book and To Do List.

PracticeMaster integrates with WORLDOX and iManage (acquired by Interwoven, Inc.) document management software. Users can search indexed documents from one or more WORLDOX or iManage databases and document profiles.

PracticeMaster also integrates with ScanSoft's PaperPort software and Visioneer's PaperPort scanner. Using drag-and-drop, scanned documents can be moved to a document management record with the file name and User ID filled in. Tabs3 and PracticeMaster also integrate with Microsoft Word and WordPerfect through the document assembly engine. Tabs3 also integrates with Tabs3 General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Trust Accounting.

PracticeMaster integrates with Microsoft Outlook for both calendaring and contacts, as well. Users can choose a one- or two-way synchronization, as well as other parameters and rules for the integrations. Both PracticeMaster and Tabs3 integrate with QuickBooks.

REPORTING – 5 Stars

PracticeMaster's Client Manager displays basic client information. Users can also launch programs, a timer, and initiate a contact search. The function falls a little short, acting only as an alternative menu and contact summary. No client financial

information displays on the screen, but it is only a click away on PracticeMaster's

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report writer along with a wizard is available and can output to multiple file formats. The company noted that *.PDF output will be available in 2005.

EASE OF USE & LEARNING CURVE – 3 Stars

Extensive customization capabilities are available, including turning fields on/off, wizards to customize reports, a Form Designer for the layout and design of screens, color-coding of calendars, Client Manager customization, and much more. With time and effort, a firm can make Tabs3 and PracticeMaster unique to their firm. Software Technology has been modernizing the user interface of Tabs3 and PracticeMaster, and has additional sophistication, interaction and efficiency features planned for the next update. Adding more built-in intelligence would make interaction easier, faster and more intuitive. One excellent feature is the ability to customize virtually any field in PracticeMaster and Tabs3. The learning curve will be a little higher with this product given the depth of features. However the excellent, step-by-step manuals, multimedia tutorials, and training courses will slide users down the learn curve more quickly. Tabs3 and PracticeMaster have a long history of stability.

RELATIVE VALUE – 4 Stars

PracticeMaster plus Tabs3 is the grandfather of practice management software. Capable and robust, the two modules deliver excellent features despite the older design. While full implementation will take some time and effort, firms can expect a good ROI.

2004 OVERALL RATING: 4 Stars

This review examined the following key areas:

Features – Does the product offer remote processing capability? Is it

designed for online use? Does it have features that

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Schedule to display our calendar, notes, phone calls and time tracking all be attached to a project? What about document management and document tracking? Can you use predefined documents and attach them to each client's project?

Integration – If you rely on other products, can the time and billing

product provide or accept data to streamline operations, such as integration with Outlook?

If your firm relies heavily on Outlook for contact management, having the contact information shared between Outlook and your time and billing product can be valuable. If you

use other products by the same vendor, can information be shared between them?

Reporting – Does the program offer extensive and flexible analytic

reporting that provides information about productivity and profitability of staff, clients and services to facilitate management decision making. Does it offer customized reports?

Ease of Use & Learning Curve – Does the program offer intuitive, on-screen

entry of time as well as on-screen, on-demand billing? Can the product be tailored and/or

customized to meet your firm's needs and the way you like to manage your firm? Can

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Relative Value – What is the cost of the program? What are the renewal costs? This is a subjective opinion of whether the program and its range of features, etc., is worth the cost. It also examines the size of the firm that would find the most value from the product.

Technology

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