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TaxSlayer Pro provides tax compliance software for professional preparers with an all-in-one package that includes support for forms 1040, 1041, 1065, 1120, 1120S, 990 and 5500, as well as all states.

The vendor also offers additional modules for bookkeeping and depreciation, both of which can be added free with the purchase of TaxSlayer Pro. Unlimited e-filing is included in the system price of \$995, which includes network capability at no additional cost. The software can be used with a variety of banks offering refund loan products.

Learning Curve – 4.5 Stars

TaxSlayer Pro has been given an updated interface that looks and acts more like a traditional Windows program, with icons for primary functions at the entry screen, but it retains much of its DOS “feel” in data entry and additional navigation options. This should aid users, since the program offers many methods of movement between modules, forms and entry fields. Accompanying the icons and pull-down menus on the initial interface screen is a pull-down list of IRS instructions and publications.

These new additions ease navigation, but unfortunately the navigation icons and publications menu are not available when working with client records. When doing such, the interface changes to a multi-paned window with a menu on the left that allows simplified movement between sections of a client return; a panel below the menu that allows jumping to specific forms and includes a search function for finding keywords within forms; a diagnostics and warnings area on the bottom; and the primary work area of the screen that shows summary client data for each line of a return, allowing for review. This summary list is linked, allowing drill-down access to data-entry sheets for each line, and showing calculated fields when appropriate. When entering data for a new client return, the system guides the preparer through a

series of data-entry sheets, following the traditional sequence of the return type

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quick movement back to specific entries.

Use/Workflow & Productivity Tools – 4 Stars

As mentioned above, navigation through the system is simple with a few exceptions, and the system provides a simplified client selection list for accessing existing returns. This list can be sorted by several criteria and also includes a search function. New client returns can be started by entering a client's TIN or SSN into another field.

TaxSlayer Pro's diagnostics and warnings feature helps alert users to errors or potential IRS flags while data is being entered, and also provides a summary of such problems below the return review window. Users can set up templates for client returns that pre-enter common information, such as employer, city or other information. The system does not offer a forms-based data-entry view, but does enable viewing and printing of actual forms while within a client return.

In addition to data-entry processes found within the Tax Returns section of the program, the system also houses several other primary areas, all of which are accessible from the main menu, which opens when there is not an open return. This menu allows access to E-File management, printing functions, a client status list, various utilities, form viewing options, and a variety of reports. Tax-Slayer Pro also includes customizable client letters, but does not offer billing, scheduling or other practice management utilities.

The addition of their bookkeeping package and depreciation system has enhanced the tax product, allowing integration of asset and write-up data into returns and offering additional revenue streams for professionals. Additionally, firms have the option to take advantage of the vendor's AdPack, which includes pre-produced TV and radio spots, as well as outdoor and print ads. The WebPack option provides a template-based web site for the firm, which is developed and maintained by TaxSlayer.

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tutorials is also available, both online through the company's support web site and on a disc that accompanies the program. Annual user seminars are also available. The system's built-in help utility is adequate, and is supported by various online help topics and FAQs. Phone-based support is available 24 hours during tax season.

Product Evolution & Vendor Vision – 4.5 Stars

TaxSlayer Pro has introduced several new features over the past two years, including the addition of its bookkeeping and depreciation applications, as well as development of the online community, the ability to download program updates from the web site, and the redesign of the user interface. The system is not on the cutting edge of technology, it isn't the most advanced and does not sport the "prettiest" interface, but the continued evolution of the product shows a devotion by the company to incorporate changes that benefit professional users. To this end, the company seeks user feedback through its seminars, personal visits and surveys.

Relative Value – 4.5 Stars

TaxSlayer Pro offers a flat-fee price that includes modules for individual and business preparation, as well as accompanying state products and inclusive unlimited e-filing. The software can be networked and used by any number of users within an office at no additional charge. The system is adept at preparing and managing returns, providing smaller firms (especially those offering bank products) with a simple tax preparation system.

2005 Overall Rating – 4.5 Stars

Technology

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