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Jul. 29, 2005

From the August 2005 Review of [Engagement & Trial Balance Software](#)

CSI offers two products in this review category. The first, Trial Balance CS, is actually a sub-set of the second, Engagement CS, and is designed for those firms not needing or wanting to implement the full paperless workflow provided by the second. Due to the nature of the application product mix methodology that Creative Solutions (CSI) uses, we will review only the Engagement CS product and not the Trial Balance CS program. This should in no way be construed as a negative. Rather, it is simply a notification that CSI provides a true TB workpaper engagement solution only in Engagement CS.

CSI is clearly one of the market leaders in accountant practice software applications. They offer an impressive lineup of integrated solutions for nearly every aspect of the traditional accountant practice model. Their reputation is also highly regarded throughout the accounting profession. Engagement CS offers a compelling solution for taking your TB engagements paperless.

### **Learning Curve – 4.5 Stars**

The user interface for these applications is very intuitive and relatively easy to navigate via traditional Windows command menus and toolbars. If you're already working with other CSI software applications, learning to navigate these two applications will be even that much easier. Plenty of online and printed resources are available to help you learn how to use the system.

### **Import/Export/Integration – 5 Stars**

As you might expect, the strongest integration is within the CSI product family. For this reason, if you are already using the CSI suite of products in your practice, these programs are a natural place to start your research of TB engagement software solutions to leverage the integration benefits.

In regards to importing client TB data, the system offers importing and data

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Up CS provides links to depreciation schedules, payroll and other detailed transaction information.

### **Trial Balance – 4.5 Stars**

The TB program is deep in features and functionality. The interface is essentially a spreadsheet view that you can control and navigate intuitively. Some of the more notable TB features include the following:

- Support for multiple TB views and control to select and sequence columns to display. Also includes multiple templates.
- Multiple journal entry types: adjusting, reclassifying, potential, budget, tax, etc.
- Link to Write-Up CS for detailed write-up engagements with support for periodic reporting.
- Journal entries update lead sheets automatically.
- Ability to add accounts “on the fly.”
- Enter journal entries in the same screen with the TB to see immediate impact.
- Comprehensive and flexible TB report generator.

The bottom line is that Trial Balance CS is a full-featured trial balance system with good integration with both the CSI product family as well as external client accounting systems and tax preparation software.

### **Workpaper Management – 4.5 Stars**

This is the core functionality of Engagement CS. The system uses the binder/folder model for organizing and viewing client workpapers. The trial balance is linked into the engagement folder as a typical workpaper. Some of the notable WP management features include the following:

- Create hyperlink indexes between workpapers.
- Direct integration with PPC guides and practice aids, including hyperlinks.

- Maintains an audit trail history of all WP activity with date and time stamp by

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Engagement team can view a current rendition of the engagement folder.

- Integration with Word and Excel for customized workpapers.
- Scan and import paper documents directly into the engagement folder.
- Comprehensive review note tracking and management and electronic WP sign-off.

Engagement CS definitely provides the breadth and depth of functionality to support an “engagement team” approach to TB-based engagements.

### **Financial Reporting – 5 Stars**

Financial reporting is handled within the Financial Reporter CS module that comes with Trial Balance CS. It is worth repeating that if workpaper management is not an important feature for your practice, you can use the TB and financial reporting tools independently.

Financial report formatting utilizes a common column-and-row methodology. There is a reasonable balance between the depth of formatting functionality and ease of use. Expect to spend some time learning how to leverage the financial report capabilities of the system. The benefits will be well worth the investment.

### **Overall Value – 4.5 Stars**

The bottom line on the Trial Balance CS and Engagement CS products is that they can compete head to head with the other leading “engagement team” based TB workpaper programs. CSI is one of the market leaders for a reason, and as you learn more about the capabilities of their solutions you will understand why. Engagement CS (four seats; includes Trial Balance CS) starts at \$1,200.

**2005 Overall Rating – 4.5 Stars**

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