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*From the September 2005 Review of [Sales](#)  
& [Use Tax Software](#)*

Known to its users as CLS, the Client Ledger System is written to run under MS-DOS and is compatible with all versions of Microsoft Windows. The Client Ledger System features general ledger, fully integrated after-the-fact payroll, financial reporting (including job costing accounting with work-in-process sub-ledger), plus a suite of add-on (additional cost) products. Add-on products include Tax Package Interface; W-2/1099 Magnetic Media; XML for Forms 941, 941C and 940; Unemployment Plus; and SUTA Magnetic Media. Also available is a CheckWriter w/Payroll and MICR Options, as well as a Remote Entry program.

CLS was originally programmed for the MS-DOS 6.22 operating system that most of us said our (final) good-byes to years ago. CLS runs well in the Windows environment, although initial setup requires a tweak or two during setup on Win2000 or Win/XP. The company told me they have 1,800 supported users updating annually, while another 1,200 to 1,400 users update less often than annually, as they use payroll programs from other vendors or find no need to update as often. That's 3,000+ users and proof positive that a viewpoint exists among professional accounting ranks — users who support the well-known technology theorem: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Thomas G. Donovan, CPA, of Newport Beach, Calif.-based The Donovan Company ([www.thedonovancompany.com](http://www.thedonovancompany.com)), uses CLS. He says that many may not like the program when they realize it is

a DOS-based package, “but it does work well in Windows and, given the

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### **LEARNING CURVE & EASE OF USE — 4 Stars**

As mentioned, minor tweaking of the Windows operating system — setting of attributes and creation of a desktop icon — is required to run this non-native application under Windows. While adequate instructions are provided in the User Manual, it would be nice if this process could be further automated. CLS requires a non-Windows-only, HP-compatible laser printer with a parallel port. BubbleJet, InkJet, DeskJet, USB-supported, or non-HP compatible laser printers will not operate with this program. A comprehensive list of supported printers is available and updated regularly on the company's web site.

Platform issue aside, the learning curve is very fast. Remember, it wasn't all that long ago that the CLS screen interface was the status quo. The menus and sub-menus, though a bit “busy” at times, are quick to learn and navigate. Users perform tasks in sub-menus, which make sense. No hunting is required, and data entry is heads-down and fast. Donovan chose CLS in 1983, and says, “There weren't that many to choose from, but I was impressed with the system at the time and have never regretted the decision.”

### **REPORTING & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS — 3.5 Stars**

Financial reporting is powerful, and formatting of financial statements is easy. Strong consolidation ability is provided together with a wide array of “canned” standard and departmental reports that are easily modified — just about every variety a user could ask for. Departmental reports are easily formatted, and that is MORE than a mouthful — a real plus for CLS users. Donovan noted that reporting is not the program's strong suit, “but it is adequate and will easily transfer information to Excel for fancy reporting capabilities,

which I actually like as I know how to use Excel and don't have to learn

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of tax data to ProSeries, Lacerte, UltraTax, ATB, ProSystem fx Tax, and others. Generic transfer is accomplished through export of trial balance amounts to an ASCII file. Production processing is available within each client only.

### **SCALABILITY & PORTABILITY — 2.5 Stars**

Portability is an issue. The future of CLS is limited to the continuing ability to execute MS-DOS programs within Microsoft Windows. Microsoft's 64-bit version of Longhorn won't run DOS applications (the company noted that the 32-bit version does), so something will have to give for users who migrate to that version of Windows.

### **SUPPORT, TRAINING & HELP SYSTEM — 3.5 Stars**

Support and training includes one printed manual, several manuals available as \*.PDF files, hands-on training classes and phone support. The company's web site also offers a FAQs section and provides fixes and updates for download. Donovan says the company's tech support is extremely responsive. He's rarely had to call, but always gets an answer or a promise of an answer, which is always fulfilled. He says, "The vendor's support and interest in my use of the program has kept me from ever considering defecting, even though it is not a Windows-based program."

### **2005 Overall Rating — 3.5 Stars**

Technology

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