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American

Riviera Software was founded in 2000, but Magtax has actually been around since the 1980s, first written two years after magnetic media filing began. Initial versions ran on mini computers. Magtax for DOS was created and subsequently migrated to Windows. In 1997 or 1998, American Riviera Software was contacted by a company that ran summer camps. The company had 3,000 employees and used QuickBooks for payroll. Responding to the client's need, American Riviera Software created its first QuickBooks import utility.

The plan for 2006 is to bring a QuickBooks DIRECT import utility to market. In fact, a version of the 2006 Magtax software (Magtax Pro version, see below, which was not available for review at the time this was written) will feature an import utility that can be distributed to individual clients for creation of W-2/1099 import files for re-submission to the (licensing) accountant. Magtax for 2006 will be sold in three versions: QuickBooks (Single Company with Direct QB Import capability) for users who do not need diverse import abilities, Magtax Standard (with unlimited companies/records, imports from QuickBooks and others), and Magtax Professional (Standard version plus distributable import module – unlimited). New licenses are \$99, \$149, and \$249 respectively. Annual updates are 50 percent of the new user price. Magtax is designed to run on most every Windows-based system currently in use today, including Windows 98/ME/NT4/2000/XP/2003 with a minimum of 256MB of RAM, 35MB of disk space, a laser printer and an Internet connection for live updates.

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both the product and the personal support I received from the owner,” he said. “Once in place, and after the rest of the firm discovered that filing electronically extended the filing deadline until March 31, we quickly added the balance of our clients to transmit all 1099s electronically.” Weiss especially appreciates the program’s ease of use and its ability to deal with small and large databases.

Usability/Navigation — 3.5 Stars

The system is easy to understand, but is time-consuming to use in practice. Separate client records are created in the program database (called a “dataset,” which is unique to each client). Likewise, a single employee/W-2 screen is used for W-2 entry while a separate payee “maintenance” screen is used to set up each 1099 vendor. After payee setup is completed, 1098 or 1099 payment records are completed. The terminology is confusing and needs to be updated. Users need to be given the ability to quickly add payee records on-screen — input that makes sense because it looks like something that the user knows (i.e., a facsimile of a Form W-2 or 1099) — onscreen data input — quick, down and dirty.

My testing was done on the 2005 system and, unfortunately, I found the system was less than fault tolerant. I was able to lock up screens by using them in other than the intended manner or by clicking a field I was not supposed to click. It’s great to have a system that can import records from popular software systems, but it’s equally important to practitioners to have an easy, foolproof method to enter that occasional Form W-2 or 1099 that is not being imported. Manual data entry needs to be more than just functional.

Reporting & Import/Export Capabilities — 3.5 Stars

Magtax supports import of data from comma-delimited (notably from Excel),

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However, for accountants who process W-2s and 1099s for many clients, each client must be uploaded separately to the IRS and SSA. I was told that the 2006 version will incorporate this needed ability.

Help/Training — 4 Stars

Magtax includes a Help file, which is built into the product. Unfortunately, Help is not available for every data-entry field. A new 166-page manual in *.PDF form is available for download or printing. Magtax has online FAQs and a knowledgebase.

However, a more in-depth knowledgebase is presently being developed in tandem with redevelopment of the support system. Technical support is provided via e-mail.

2006 Overall Rating: 4 Stars

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