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Abundant Options for Mid-Range Accounting

Additional Options for Growing Clients

Dec. 01, 2006

In our September 2006 issue, we examined the current field of [mid-range accounting programs](#), a growing market that shows considerable diversity in the available programs. (You can access this review in the archives at www.CPATechAdvisor.com.) During the year, this magazine also reviews small business accounting products, not-for-profit systems, and high-end systems designed for larger entities (see the high-end accounting review in this issue on page 38). As we determine where specific products fit, programs occasionally get missed or opt not to participate because their most recent release isn't ready in time for the review.

Such was the case with the review of mid-range accounting products.

Specifically, there are three additional major options on the market that should also be considered when a business outgrows its low-end accounting system:

QuickBooks

Enterprise, Peachtree Quantum and Microsoft Small Business Financials. While every entity searching for a new mid-tier accounting and business management package has varying reasons for the change, the reasons generally include the need for more concurrent users, greater support for inventory or manufacturing, higher-volume processing or improved integration with other programs.

The factors driving the desire or need for a change of software systems, in addition to the projected needs of the company in the next few years, are the keys to finding the best accounting application for that entity. So first determine the business needs, then consider the products featured in our September mid-range

accounting review as well as the following three mid-range accounting systems.

Intuit

— QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions

www.QuickBooksEnterprise.com

Version 7.0 of Intuit's mid-market QuickBooks Enterprise is geared straight at the growing business, keeping the simplicity of QuickBooks that many small companies are used to but also delivering additional capabilities that enable the system to handle the needs of businesses that have outgrown their regular SMB accounting system.

For starters, QuickBooks Enterprise supports up to 20 concurrent users and sports all of the traditional features found in the Pro and Premier editions, with additional features including support for SQL databases and remote locations, as well as stronger financial management tools. Enterprise's interface utilizes a customizable flowchart/business process model, which simplifies most common tasks and eases processes such as turning estimates into invoices with a single click. QuickBooks Enterprise offers great integration with MS Word and Excel for report generation and customization and client correspondence and data analysis, as well as with Outlook for appointment scheduling and contact management.

In keeping with all QuickBooks systems, Enterprise is simple to learn, especially for those already using another version since the interface and all functions remain the same across most of the versions. And since the programs are built upon the same code base, no data conversion or transfer is required for upward transition from the other QuickBooks versions. Enterprise utilizes standard double-entry accounting methods and includes integrated GL, AP, AR, invoicing, payroll capabilities and job costing functions. The program's inventory also supports multi-part assemblies and other advanced tools. Enterprise also includes a full-time audit trail.

Intuit has recently added enhanced customer tracking and inventory functions that can manage more than 100,000 customers, vendors, employees and inventory items, as well as non-inventory and service items, with support for varying units of measure and custom price levels on estimates. Other new additions include improved shipping management, a revamped employee/contractor time

management

system, more custom form creation tools, additional functionality in the Payroll Center and new online marketing services from Google, such as AdWords and the new QuickBooks Product Listing Service.

Intuit also offers the QuickBooks Enterprise Solution Provider Program, which is designed to help accounting professionals grow their practices by delivering value-added services that meet the sophisticated needs of QuickBooks Enterprise users. Solution Providers receive QuickBooks discounts; quarterly commissions; customer leads; educational, marketing and sales resources; and dedicated support. QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions starts at \$3,000 for a five-user license, with additional five-user packs available for \$1,500, and up to a 20-user license for \$7,500.

Sage

Software, Inc. — Peachtree Quantum

www.PeachtreeQuantum.com

This year, Sage introduced the premier version of its Peachtree line, Quantum 2007. The system provides all of the features and capabilities of the Complete and Premium versions of Peachtree, plus the capabilities available in the industry-specific

versions of Peachtree (Manufacturing, Distribution, Construction and Nonprofit), which are boosted by Quantum's additional strengths geared to benefit businesses who may have outgrown certain aspects of their small business accounting

package. Foremost among Quantum's capabilities is its support for up to 10 concurrent users, up from five in the other versions of Peachtree, as well as a more robust database that gives it the ability to handle greater numbers of transactions, clients, vendors and inventory. The system shares the same general design structure and interface as its siblings, and data is automatically migrated into the system when upgrading.

The key to Peachtree's ease-of-use lies in its redesigned interface, which is centered around the customizable Business Status Center, which provides a series of executive dashboards that can be set to display virtually any business data that a particular user wants to keep tabs on and have instant access to, depending upon security access rights. Dashboards are available for Business Status, Customers & Sales, Vendors & Purchases, Inventory & Services,

Employees & Payroll, Banking, and Company. The system's features are also accessible through a flowchart diagram.

Peachtree Quantum offers a comprehensive array of integrated modules for GL, AP, AR, billing, inventory and vendor management, and integrates with Sage Software's

ACT! for more advanced contact management, and with Timeslips for enhanced time and billing capabilities. The system includes the same exceptional and customizable reporting functions as the other versions, as well as analysis, benchmarking and trend identification functions. All reporting can be output to Word, Excel or *.PDF, and can be enhanced with charts and graphs. The system also integrates with Outlook for contact management and e-mail functions, including the ability to send invoices, sales orders, quotes and other items from within the program. Peachtree Quantum costs \$3,750 for a license that supports up to 10 users.

Microsoft

Dynamics — Small Business Financials

www.Microsoft.com/Dynamics

Microsoft's Small Business Financials is based upon the same code as Microsoft Dynamics GP, providing an exceptionally strong and upward-migratable base for an application geared toward small and mid-sized businesses whose financial or business process needs can no longer be met with their off-the-shelf SMB accounting system. The system comes with the MSDE desktop server and is also compatible with SQL.

Small Business Financials supports up to 10 concurrent users and includes integrated GL, AP, AR and other financial management features, as well as built-in modules for sales, purchasing, inventory and advanced reporting. Optional modules are available for payroll, asset management and magnetic media, as well as FRx Designer and Crystal Reports. With the optional U.S. Payroll module, the system offers strong HR and pay management functions, automating most processes and providing direct deposit, benefit management, government reporting and tax table updates.

The program's interface is very intuitive and maintains the look and feel of a Microsoft Office program, providing both workflow design methods of navigation as well as various menu options for accessing the system's primary modules and features. Small Business Financials uses Excel-based budgeting

that should be instantly familiar to most users, and it offers excellent support for distribution processes, helping to streamline sales order processing. The system also provides strong supply chain management and back-end e-commerce capabilities. Small Business Financials integrates seamlessly with Microsoft's Office programs, including Word for all reporting, which makes editing and customizing

reports very simple. Financial data can be output to Excel or exported into FRx for further analysis. It also integrates with MS Outlook for e-mail functions and contact management.

Microsoft Small Business Financials is available only through Microsoft partners who also offer installation, training and support services. The cost of the system, without installation or other services, is \$995 for a two-seat license; \$1,395 for three users; \$2,195 for five users; and an additional \$400 per user thereafter, up to 10 users. Support is free the first year but is thereafter priced at 18 percent of the software cost.

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