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21st Century Accounting initially started with some of the original BPI programmers, attracting users of that program and of the former ACCPAC DOS series. The program provided them with a more evolved accounting package that met their small market and mid-range needs, while still offering the price point and simplicity of a lower-tier package. The program is now a full-featured Windows program, providing all of the traditional interface functionality and customization options of advanced systems, with core accounting modules that include GL, AR, AP, payroll, bank management, job costing, inventory and sales orders. The system supports any number of companies and is networkable for up to 10 concurrent users. A single-user license costs $995, and includes the Pervasive SQL database. A 3-user license is $1,395; and a 10-user client/server system is $2,295. Annual program and tax rate table updates cost $395 per year. The company's payroll system is also offered as Adagio Payroll to users of that system.

Ease of Use/Basic Functionality — 4 Stars
21st Century Accounting is instantly different in its interface, providing just the top of a program window with pull-down menus for the core modules and utilities. This method will be familiar to those who've recently used a Mac, but not so much to regular PC users. The company notes that this is to keep the user's desktop uncluttered and simplify access to other programs. It really is just an aesthetic point, however, since when a module is opened the program becomes more traditional, with work screens popping up to provide data entry, account lookup and other functions. Generally, however, the system remains less graphical than other systems, which results in condensed data screens that provide more rapid access to information and similarly rapid data-entry capabilities. Each of the pull-down

Initial setup is generally simple, but limited assistance is available during the setup process. The program offers only a handful of template charts of accounts for specific business types, which are corporations, not-for-profits, partnerships and sole proprietorships, each with or without payroll.

Core Features/Expandability — 3.5 Stars
As previously noted, the 21st Century Accounting system includes core accounting functions for GAAP-compliant GL, receivables, payables, payroll, sales, banking and inventory. The program's GL function is extraordinarily flexible, providing customization capabilities that allow up to 20 alphanumeric characters and five division segments, which enables multiple divisions, cost centers and other organizational structuring. This allows multiple control accounts with separate balance sheets, enabling the production of independent financials and reporting for these subsidiary units, as well as combined financial reporting. Account structures can be edited at any time to add cost centers or divisions without disrupting the data within the accounts and still maintaining appropriate and accurate financial reporting capabilities. The GL also allows periods to be left open indefinitely, while still being locked to prevent unauthorized changes. Don't worry. The system also includes a full-time audit trail to log all changes made to transactions, along with user name, date and other data.

The AR system enables calculation and tracking of finance charges and debit/credit memos, and supports Canadian GST. 21st Century's item tracking supports the ability to assign up to five prices per item and five units of measure per item, and can deliver sales analysis reporting. Although the program includes payables and inventory functions, it oddly does not currently offer purchase order capabilities.

21st Century's payroll functions support Direct Deposit and can be used for live or after-the-fact processing, with the ability to print fileable versions of all remittance

and compliance forms. Federal and state payroll tax table updates are available with

All of the program's reports can be previewed on-screen, and the system includes the ability to export reports to PDF and text files and then allows users to send them directly to the user's e-mail program or a server folder. Additionally, the system allows considerable customization of forms and reports, and all data can be exported to virtually any program capable of receiving it, from Excel, Lotus, Word and other programs. The reporting and bank reconciliation functions also include drilldown capabilities. In addition to traditional reporting that includes full financials, aging reports, cash flow, transactions, client histories and journals, the system offers federal payroll forms
W-2, W-3, 940, 941 and 1099, as well as CA DE6.

Audit Trail, Integrity & Accountant Control Tools – 4.5 Stars
A truly full-time audit trail continually tracks all transactions and changes, and the system includes security setting options that enable group or individual access and restriction to specific functions or core areas of the program.

Import/Export/Integration — 3.5 Stars
21st Century Accounting offers full automatic conversion of accounting data from BPI, but the system does not import data directly from other systems. The program does, however, provide an open architecture that allows it to work with third-party applications for specialty industries, including dispatch, inventory and niche-market front-end and POS programs. The system can export financial data as well as customer, client and employee information to a variety of formats, including Excel, Access, PDF and text files.

Help & Support Options — 4.5 Stars
21st Century Accounting includes strong built-in Help functions that include right-click access to line-specific Help as well as built-in tutorials, FAQs, a tip of the day and other items. But the system does not provide much in the way of wizards for

initial setup. Various support packages are available, as well as the tax table and

continue using the front-end business process programs specialized to their respective markets. Similarly, the system may initially seem slightly antiquated in its interface, but this is intentional, allowing quicker access to key functions without adding a bunch of clutter. "Simple by design" is the way to describe 21st Century Accounting. It may offer less in terms of breadth of features and business process functions, but if you want an accounting package and not a program that does everything under the sun, then 21st Century Accounting shines through when it comes to the nuts and bolts of accounting.

2007 Overall Rating: 4 Stars