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Microsoft — Microsoft Office Accounting Professional 2007

800-969-7900 www.microsoft.com/office/accounting

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[From the June/July 2007 Review of Small Business Accounting Systems](#)

After some adjustments and name changes to its products since Microsoft debuted its accounting system last year, the company seems to be settling in for the long run with two primary packages. Microsoft Office Accounting Express 2007 is a free single-user system for very small businesses, providing users with GL, AP, AR, invoicing, online banking and integration with PayPal and eBay, along with remote access to the accounting system for the business' professional accountant. Office Accounting Express 2007 is included with Office Professional 2007, Office Ultimate 2007 and Office Small Business Edition 2007 or can be downloaded from www.ideawins.com. Users of the Express version can upgrade to the full version if necessary.

For businesses with more complex requirements, Microsoft also offers a more fully featured version called Office Accounting Professional 2007 (formerly Small Business Accounting), which provides the full accounting functions including inventory, multicurrency, fixed assets and sales order processing, along with support for up to eight simultaneous users (each with a licensed copy of the program), integration with Office products, job costing, multi-currency capabilities, expanded inventory management functions, contact management tools, more customization options, additional payroll capabilities and optional business services. Microsoft Office

Accounting Professional 2007 costs \$149.95 for a single-user license that can support any number of companies.

Ease of Use/Basic Functionality — 5 Stars

Virtually everyone is familiar with Microsoft products, so it is of little surprise that one of Office Accounting Professional's biggest draws is its completely Office-esque interface, which not only acts and feels like traditional Windows programs, but also offers the best direct integration with Word, Excel and Outlook, with the ability to easily save reports into one of these formats or use mail and contact management functions. Setup tasks are simplified by various wizards that guide company, client and inventory setup, with template charts of accounts for most traditional industry and business types.

The system opens to a multi-panel screen that can be customized to display account summaries and personalized reminder notices for items such as overdue invoices, back orders, payables and payroll tasks. It also shows graphical elements such as cash flow projections and provides links to specific tasks, such as new accounts and journal entries, as well as search functions via the Find panel. This allows users to search through the chart of accounts, journal entries, inventory items, customers, vendors, employees, transactions and other data.

Office Accounting Professional provides excellent customer and vendor lists that offer multiple searching and sorting methods along with at-a-glance data and balance information. The system's data-entry screens allow on-the-fly addition of new customers and drop-down selection lists, as well as smart entry forms. Overall, the system provides outstanding navigation and an intuitive layout that should be almost immediately comfortable to most users. One little annoyance, however, is that the screen includes a small advertising panel for associated products and services. In Office Accounting Professional 2007, this advertising panel can be easily turned off by clicking the "Add/remove content" link on the top right of any workflow screen.

Core Features/Expandability — 4.5 Stars

Core modules are accessible either from traditional pull-down menus across the top or from a menu on the left, which includes options for Company, Customers, Vendors, Employees, Banking, Online Sales and Reports. Working within one of these core areas provides the user with a general workflow diagram that shows primary tasks in this area, while task options also appear on the left in the Task menu

and at the bottom of the screen. Each of the primary module dashboard screens can be customized to show overviews of key data as desired by individual users.

In addition to GL, AR and AP, Office Accounting Professional offers inventory, payroll, HR functions, job costing and fixed asset management. Additional payroll functions and full-service options are available through ADP, while advanced integrated contact management capabilities are available in Outlook 2007 with Business Contact Manager. Integrated electronic banking is available with hundreds of institutions, which greatly improves and eases the reconciliation process and also provides electronic vendor bill paying options. For check-based payments, MICR printing is available. Credit card acceptance is offered as well as options for PayPal online payments by customers. Time tracking and billing options are available for service-based industries. Microsoft's inventory functions support kits and assembly items (but not subcategories), as well as multiple pricing levels and discounts per customer or item, but the program only offers FIFO costing, and does not easily support multiple geographic warehouse locations.

Among the most notable new features for 2007 is the Accountant Transfer Wizard, which allows businesses to securely transfer data in real-time with their external CPA or accounting professional. Also with the professional accountant in mind, Microsoft has added a Payroll Center for Accountants, which allows the professional to manage payroll for multiple clients from one location, with the ability to share responsibilities and print batch checks for multiple clients at one time. Microsoft has also added a fixed asset management system with calculations for all traditional depreciation methods and treatments. The separate Microsoft Point of Sale system can integrate with the accounting program to provide a fully functional retail system.

Businesses using Accounting Express can move upward into Office Accounting Professional with ease since the programs are built on the same general code and utilize the same interface. There is no simple upward migration from Pro, however, since Microsoft's Dynamics and other higher-end accounting packages are built on varying systems.

Reporting & Management Functions — 4.5 Stars

Office Accounting Professional offers unparalleled integration with other Office programs such as Excel, Word and Outlook, as well as analysis tools that can generate pivot tables and Access database reports. Improved forms customization options allow users to tailor forms and reports to their needs and save them for

future use, with editing functions and client correspondence tools available using Word. The system also gives the ability to easily e-mail documents using Outlook. Traditional reporting options include full financials, trial balance, transaction reports, cash flow, AR aging, sales and payables. As previously mentioned, the new Accountant Transfer Wizard is a great addition, allowing management to transfer accounting data files to their accountant without closing a period and in real time, with corrections synched back into the system. Office Accounting Professional can print signature-ready payroll and tax forms.

Audit Trail, Integrity & Accountant Control Tools — 4.5 Stars

Office Accounting Professional offers an always-on audit trail that logs all transactions and journal entries, tracking user and data information. The program also includes customizable security roles that allow permission-based access to user groups, roles and specific users in an organization. ::::;

Import/Export/Integration — 5 Stars

The program feels and works like an Office application because it is an Office application, providing excellent interaction with other programs like Word, Excel, Outlook and Access, as well as with the Business Contact Manager add-on to Outlook, which provides advanced contact management functions. The system also works with Microsoft Office Live for secure data exchange and can be used with Microsoft Point of Sale for retail environments. Online sales options allow the ability to utilize eBay and other online sales sites, with data automatically processed into the accounting system. Office Accounting Professional can save files to PDF, Excel, Access, XML and text formats, with text-based reports and correspondence savable in both *.DOC and *.DOCX formats. The program can import data from Intuit, Excel and Money files. Optional payroll services are also available through built-in integration with ADP.

Help & Support Options — 4 Stars

Office Accounting Professional's built-in Help and assistance features are excellent, providing right-click menus and field-specific assistance, along with links to support and program updates and an online user community. Additionally, a link is offered to an Accountant Finder function that allows small businesses to search for a professional near them. The listed providers are members of Microsoft's free Professional Accountants' Network. Various Help and instructional panels within the interface also provide guidance. Microsoft offers free initial support, but support thereafter can be pricey.

Relative Value — 4.5 Stars

Microsoft Office Accounting Professional is a great bargain for businesses with less complex inventory needs, based upon its capabilities and its ultimate ease of use. While current third-party options available to users for add-on features are not as plentiful as the larger partner market of QuickBooks, Microsoft has been developing this network quickly. The program offers basic inventory options but strong functionality in other core areas, with average reporting capabilities that are strengthened by its tight integration with Word and Excel. The system can now support up to eight users.

2007 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

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