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From the June/July 2007 Review of Small Business Accounting Systems

Over the past few years, Sage has been revamping its popular line of small business accounting systems, with the latest generation, Peachtree by Sage Premium Accounting 2008 due out in June. The program, which is at the higher end of Sage's small business accounting product line, includes traditional GL, AP, AR, inventory, payroll and contact management functions, along with additional features for job costing, data analysis, time & billing, and fixed asset management. The company has continued to add to the major revision introduced last year, with the 2008 version providing increased usability features, especially in reporting and system performance, with improvements related to the time it takes to save transactions and records.

Peachtree Premium Accounting supports up to five named users with a networked multi-user license, and the system comes in versions specifically tailored to the needs of various industries, including construction, manufacturing, distribution, nonprofit organizations, and professional accountants. Premium costs $499 for a single user, with a multi-user license costing $1,099. Peachtree also offers the entry-level Peachtree First Accounting, the mid-range Peachtree Pro and Peachtree Complete lines, as well as the higher-end Peachtree Quantum, released last year, which offers more features and performance for small enterprises.

Ease of Use/Basic Functionality — 5 Stars
Peachtree Premium took a big leap last year with the addition of new Navigation Centers, which act as overview screens that provide users with an interface that can be customized to provide instant, at-a-glance access to the key business indicators such as account balances, past due receivables, cash flow and other data they need to keep on top of. The data can be presented in either text or graphical formats with

drilldown capabilities, which greatly eases the task of getting into the financial

In addition to its exceptionally customizable Navigation Centers, Peachtree offers a sleek interface that includes tabbed screens for moving between data-entry tasks, while data fields offer assistance items including lookup lists, auto-fill and smart-entry functions, speeding transaction entry tasks, customer/vendor selection and other functions. The program also provides assistive features for setup tasks, including template charts of accounts for nearly 100 business types, and tools for customizing company preferences. The continued development of the system has resulted in a Peachtree much evolved from only a few years ago, with outstanding navigation, customization and usability features, combined with more robust accounting and business management capabilities.

Core Features/Expandability — 5 Stars
Peachtree Premium's core accounting set provides fully compliant account structures with strong AR management features that include progress billing and job costing options. It also offers the ability to easily create and track sales orders, back orders and customer payment status, as well as the ability to produce credit memos. The AR fully integrates with the sales functions to provide simplified transition of customer estimates and quotes into invoices and easing the task of invoicing and posting receipts. Likewise, the payables function centralizes vendor data and key information, easing the process of keeping up with this side of the workflow. The AP center also has an optional online bill payment (EFT) capability.

Peachtree's enhanced inventory functionality supports FIFO, LIFO, ACOGs and unit control costing methods, with support for assembly items and serialized inventory tracking, which allows tracking of actual cost of each item. The inventory system offers 10 item price levels that can be set per customer or other variable, and also includes the ability to automatically create purchase orders based on stock levels. Peachtree's time-based billing provides good functionality for an included feature with multiple rates for employee, activity, flat-fee or rate overrides, as well as

multiple options for billing status and the ability to track and bill expenses. The

Many of the enhancements to this year's version of Premium Accounting involve reporting. Sage has added new income statements and more than 100 new data fields, 50 new filters and 30 new sorting options, along with improvements to 19 of the most-used reports and increased report customization capabilities. Additionally, reports include drilldown functionality, and reporting functions are easier to find and generate. The system can output reports into PDF, Excel and Word formats, with the ability to e-mail quotes, sales orders, invoices, client collection letters and other statements.

Peachtree can print signature-ready forms W-2, W-3, 940 and 941. Businesses can use the program's payroll functions either in-house with the add-on Payroll Tax Update Service or can utilize the company's full-service payroll system. Direct Deposit is also available. The system's enhanced data analysis options offer a Comparative Budget Spreadsheet Creator that speeds the process of comparing financials and budgets, providing a spreadsheet view.

Audit Trail, Integrity & Accountant Control Tools — 4 Stars
Management functions include ample security access rights that can prohibit unauthorized employees from seeing specific areas such as payroll or AR, while the system also maintains an audit trail that logs all activities. The audit trail can be turned off by top-level users, which is not ideal since it may enable alterations, whether well-intentioned or not, by these users. Periods can be locked when closed. Other managerial functions include the ability to set credit limits that require a manager to turn off, while several years' worth of company financials can be stored using the Archive Company Data feature.

Import/Export/Integration — 4.5 Stars
Peachtree Premium can output into Word, Excel and PDF formats for paperless management and electronic transmission of documents, while increased integration

with Excel

libraries, sample company data for training, tutorials and virtual tours of the program. Free online support options include the Peachtree Knowledge Center and FAQs. Support packages and tax table update subscriptions are available at an additional cost.

Relative Value — 5 Stars
The continued evolution of the Peachtree line, especially Premium Accounting and the industry-specific versions, has resulted in a program that can handle the "hard" accounting functions, while keeping the system superbly usable for both novice and experienced bookkeepers. This year's enhancements, most notably to the reporting features and system speed along with the program's excellent Navigation Centers, increase its value to small businesses by making it
easier to manage all of their business processes and keep on top of key business information. Peachtree Premium is scalable upward or downward and thus offers an intelligent long-term option for small businesses. :::::

2007 Overall Rating — 5 Stars