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Business Accounting Systems

Although it may not have the brand recognition of some of the other software companies in this review section, CheckMark Software has been developing small business accounting and payroll systems longer than most of them, starting in 1984 with payroll and general ledger. The company's MultiLedger software, which is designed for use on both PC and Mac computers, provides core accounting modules that include AP, AR, inventory with support for multiple pricing levels, MICR checkwriting and job tracking. It also includes 1099 reporting and integrates data from CheckMark payroll with support for commissions, wage reporting, financials generation, budgeting tools, trial balance and contact management capabilities.

The base package of the MultiLedger system can support any number of businesses and departments at one geographic location, and is network-ready, allowing installation on up to 10 computers and with licensing for up to 10 concurrent users included for \$399. The optional CheckMark Payroll module costs \$249 and can be used independently of the accounting program if desired. Payroll tax table updates cost \$125 annually.

Ease of Use/Basic Functionality — 4 Stars

After a simple installation and setup process that provides some guidance features like sample charts of accounts, the primary user interface for MultiLedger starts with the Command Center, a rather unique screen that provides three groups of function buttons arranged by task type, including Set Up, Transactions and Reports. Each group of buttons takes users directly to specific functions. For example, the buttons in the Transactions category include links to tasks such as creating or searching customer invoices; setting finance charges; making vendor payments;

inventory functions; bank reconciliation; the general ledger, sales and disbursement

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and provides little customization options, it is still quite functional, providing very quick access to primary program functions. For most users, the core work of the program is found in transaction data screens when creating and posting sales, accepting payments from customers and when paying vendors. These screens are simple to understand, with the ability to add comment fields to transactions and popup selection lists for posting to specific accounts, job centers, terms, shipping methods and other details, while also providing quick access to related reporting and printing functions.

Core Accounting/Security Functions — 4 Stars

MultiLedger's strength is in its simplicity. That is, it focuses primarily on traditional dual-entry accounting functions and provides GL, payables, receivables, inventory and reporting functions along with job cost tracking, cash flow management, support for multiple companies, commission functions and averaging costing methods.

The included inventory module is designed to accommodate multiple pricing, customer discounts and variable tax rates based on jurisdiction. Users can also set quantity reorder levels. The inventory system also supports assembly items created from multiple existing inventory stock. The optional CheckMark Payroll system can be used live or after-the-fact and provides multiple pay rates per employee, benefits management and wage reporting.

While CheckMark has foregone bloating the MultiLedger system with many of the add-on features that have been added to more expensive programs over the years, this can be a positive aspect to some users because it keeps the price point low and keeps the program focused on its core functions while also preventing

the program from growing overly complex. That said, the program does not offer

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offers a good range of financial reports that includes individual income statements for each cost center or subsidiary unit, financial snapshots, cash flow, balance sheet reports and trial balance. Prior-year comparisons and budget comparisons are available, as well. Financial reports also include drilldown capabilities. Users can view, print or output reports to PDF or plain text, which enables copying the data into Word or Excel for additional manipulation. No tools are available for reminders, alerts or to-do lists, although users can add any number of comment fields to transactions.

Import/Export/Integration — 3 Stars

MultiLedger fully integrates with CheckMark's Payroll solution, but does not offer direct integration with Word, Excel or Outlook, which results in no calendaring or direct client communication tools and requires users to export to plain text and then open in Word or Excel for using these programs. Likewise, the program does not offer remote access functions.

Help & Support Options — 4 Stars

MultiLedger is very easy to learn and use and provides adequate built-in assistance features, while online DIY Help options include a Knowledge Base and tutorials. Support is included for the first 60 days and is offered afterward through subscription packages.

Relative Value — 4 Stars

MultiLedger is a good, basic small business bookkeeping system that is fully capable of handling the nuts and bolts of dual-entry, GAAP-compliant accounting while providing a full-time audit trail and other security features. The system does not offer some of the perks of its competitors, such as dashboards, to-do lists, alerts, calendaring, remote access or reminders, but this has also helped

to keep the cost of the system in the very affordable range of \$399 for up to

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