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From the April/May 2006 [Review of Tax Prep Suites](#)

CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business, offers a full suite of accounting and tax applications through its ProSystem *fx* Office line, including ProSystem *fx* Tax, which provides professionals with a comprehensive preparation and research system that supports all compliance needs for all federal entities, as well as all states and local government entities with filing requirements. Each of the program's modules can be purchased individually, or in bundled packages, and can be enhanced with the addition of the vendor's associated products, which include practice management, research, trial balance, engagement and fixed asset management. A four-user license of ProSystem *fx* Tax with modules capable of meeting the needs of the prototype firm outlined in the [introduction](#) would cost about \$11,000, although non-advertised discounts, promotional offers and bundling can reduce this investment. CCH also offers pay-per-return licensing of its products.

Jim Sharvin, CPA, of Columbus, Ohio-based Sharvin & Associates, CPAs (www.sharvincpa.com)

uses CCH's Global *fx* suite due to the diversity of his practice, which keeps him on the road quite a bit, both domestically and internationally. "Using Global *fx* does not constrict me to a single office location, and I can access both source documents and tax returns via the Internet wherever I can access the Web," he notes.

Since the Global *fx* product is virtually the same as ProSystem *fx*, there was no learning curve involved, and Sharvin has great peace of mind using the company's secure servers. He recommends that new and potential users

take time during a slower time of the year to install and upload a few test

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an innovative CPA,” Sharvin says. “I need to be out in the world interacting and digging up new business opportunities, and Global *fx* gives me the tools to accomplish my goals each year.”

Learning Curve — 4 Stars

Since last year's redesign of the interface, ProSystem *fx* Tax is a much more user-friendly application, offering crisp and well-engineered screens that help guide users through system functions with intuitive icons, menus and selection lists. Most ProSystem *fx* Office applications share the same general interface and integrate with each other, helping reduce redundant data entry and ensuring consistency of client data.

The tax preparation system opens by default to a client selection screen that shows the user the returns available in their Office Group for which they have authorization to work. The open return screen has a number of other options, as well, including most recently used return (default), results list created by the most recent client/return search or returns in user inbox. The selection list includes sortable columnar data, as well as extensive search and filtering criteria available in a menu on the left side of the screen. Within client returns, the program allows data entry via both interview and forms-based methods, as well as a worksheet view, all of which are accompanied by a Navigation panel on the left that allows users to move quickly between forms using an expandable menu tree.

Data entry is aided by “smart list” selection screens for several common entry fields, letting users select a previously entered item such as city, state, employer or ZIP Code from a pull-down list. Although the system automatically performs the tasks and maintains them in the appropriate databases, calculated, overridden and transferred amounts do not update on-screen

automatically.

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external accounting-focused applications, as well as internally within the tax program. Within returns, either in interview or forms mode, users can drill down to the source forms, schedules and worksheets for calculated or transferred data, and can access explanations and instructions for any field by simply double-clicking on the entry field. Double-clicking on date entry fields prompts an on-screen calendar.

The program eases K-1 data transfer between individual and partnership/corp returns, and includes a dynamic K-1 import/export utility that integrates with Excel. The system uses field shading to note overridden and estimate entries, with overrides only accessible by authorized users. Additionally, an audit trail of all changes within a client return is available, along with additional management tools, productivity analysis functions and reporting options. Preparation and management staff can utilize tick marks and attach notes to fields, aiding in the review process. The strong return diagnostic function helps locate missing data and identify errors, while also offering options for potentially increasing credits or deductions. The company added specialized support for dual monitors for TY2005.

Additional tools for the user include a time clock that can integrate with ProSystem *fx* Practice, the Client Manager, and a To Do List function that eases task management and due-date monitoring. Through integration with CCH's tax research offerings, the program's DataScan Plus can alert users to specific clients that may be affected by tax code changes. An optional electronic client organizer function is also available, which can directly feed client data input into their return pending approval and review by the firm.

Integration/Import & Export — 5 Stars

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ProSystem *fx* Tax can export and import data in spreadsheet format and offers extensive import/export capabilities with Excel and Word. The system can save returns in *.PDF format. Conversions are free for users of most major tax preparation systems.

Support/Training & Help System — 5 Stars

The built-in Help utility within ProSystem *fx* Tax is fully developed, providing multiple right-click assistance features, including access to line-by-line instructions and guidance, as well as links to the CCH support web site and other online resources. A variety of training options is available, including live and online seminars, web-conferences and on-site programs, with additional options available at the company's annual user conference.

Product Evolution & Vendor Vision – 5 Stars

CCH has continued aggressive expansion and development of the ProSystem *fx* line of products, both through in-house program design and through acquisition. As the system has matured, it has grown increasingly comprehensive, and integration between disparate modules has increased, which in turn helps the productivity of the program's users. The tax system has seen recent improvements to its interface, online options, streamlined input methods and increased printing flexibility. All of these factors demonstrate that the company recognizes that continued evolution of the program is necessary to meet the continually evolving needs of tax professionals.

Relative Value — 4.5 Stars

ProSystem *fx* Tax is not intended to be an off-the-shelf system, which is evidenced by its price-point and its exceptional capabilities. The program is geared for midsize and larger tax practices, or those of any size that routinely handle complex returns that require a strong preparation and rigid review process.

However, the company noted that a significant percentage of its customers are

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