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## Thomson RIA — GoSystem RS

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RIA's GoSystem Tax RS is at the pinnacle of tax preparation systems, providing a comprehensive online solution that spans the compliance spectrum and provides exceptional integration with RIA's renowned research products. The program continues to be the only fully web-based professional tax solution offered by a major vendor, a feature that makes GoSystem RS ideally suited to multi-office practices or those needing the remote capabilities of an online system. But another valuable feature of online applications is that all system updates are performed automatically by RIA, which helps ensure that a tax firm is always using the most complete and up-to-date version. Each of the system's modules can be purchased individually or in bundled packages. The program is generally not geared toward smaller practices because of its high-end capabilities and price, which would be about \$15,000 for a firm meeting the needs of our prototype practice ([see intro](#)), which the company said does not meet the typical needs of the vendor's customers. However, as the company also noted, many small practices find exceptional value in selected use of the system modules through productivity and workflow management enhancement. Additionally, unmarketed discounts and packages may be available.

## **Learning Curve — 4 Stars**

The web-based GoSystem Tax RS system is accessed through a secure web browser, although the system performs in almost every other way as a traditional server application, with icons, pull-down menus and a primary start screen that allows users to search for existing returns or begin a new one, as well as accessing administrative and processing functions, viewing case studies, using the Help utility and other options. The client return finder includes multiple filters and search options, including limiting by tax year, return/entity type, name and recently worked on returns. Data entry is performed on either form replicas or on organizer worksheets, both of which provide tabs for moving between pages and sections of returns, with other available forms accessible via a menu on the left side of the work area. These general design components provide an intuitive working environment, although because of GoSystem's significant capabilities and ability to handle the most complex returns, full proficiency with the program would be aided by use of an in-house or vendor-led formalized training program.

## **Use/Workflow & Productivity Tools — 5 Stars**

Where to begin? GoSystem Tax RS is an exceptionally powerful tax compliance system that give users very strong data management, storage, access and collaboration tools, in addition to the advantages provided by a web-based system: mobile access, less IT requirements and always-updated programs. GoSystem Tax RS also includes online return conferencing and online client organizers that sync data into the tax system. Data entry is aided by several functions within the system, including smartlists and data linking to supporting forms, schedules and worksheets. And review processes are outstanding, with tickmarks, review notes, and preparer and reviewer checklists and on-screen diagnostics, as well as an audit trail that tracks every change in any amount in every return.

The program further simplifies the preparation process by providing a tax summary screen that shows an at-a-glance overview of the client return complete with the ability to drill down to supporting documents. Security protocols are similarly strong, with access restrictable by user, type of return or activity, and also enabling multiple users to access and work on a client return simultaneously while ensuring that no data is overwritten. Individual users can even open and work in multiple returns at the same time, which can assist when comparing treatments.

The program also lets users attach documents to client returns or create customized links to any part of a return.

The program automatically computes and transfers data as needed throughout the tax modules, including the sharing of K-1 data between business returns and individual partner/shareholder returns. Complex returns are easily accommodated, with the program automatically including 1065 reconciliation schedules and offering tools to track amounts assigned to each member of a consolidation, including access to amounts for all entities and subsidiaries. The system also offers strong capabilities when handling expatriate returns, with custom tax equalization and automatic flow of the foreign tax credit from 1041 K-1s to 1116. Users can directly access RIA's Checkpoint tax research system from within the tax application and can attach links to specific tax documents to affected clients or data fields, with notes for reviewers. The program can output to true Adobe \*.PDF format with bookmarks without the need for the full Adobe program.

### **Integration/Import & Export — 5 Stars**

GoSystem Tax RS offers exceptional internal integration, with data flowing throughout the system's modules as needed, and the integration of Checkpoint research components is beneficial, especially the ability to attach links to research or analysis findings directly to client returns. The program includes a trial balance bridge and can import from \*.DIF files, and also can import and share data with several trial balance and reporting packages. It also integrates with other Thomson company products including Creative Solutions, as well as with BNA and Sage Software's asset management systems. As well, it integrates with third-party applications from Caseware, Fi-Tek, SurePrep, GoFileRoom and Documentum. RIA offers client data conversions for users of Lacerte and ProSystem fx Tax.

### **Support/Training & Help System — 5 Stars**

Many web-based programs are light on their built-in Help utilities, but the GoSystem Tax RS system is an exception, providing numerous assistive tools that include easy access to form instructions, line- and content-sensitive Help, tutorials and user guides. The program also contains a library of case studies that can be used for training purposes. RIA offers various training and seminar options.

## **Product Evolution & Vendor Vision — 5 Stars**

RIA continues to add features that strengthen GoSystem Tax RS and is also pursuing increased integration functionality, primarily with other Thomson programs. The company has also continued its efforts to keep the program intuitive without reducing its power.

## **Relative Value — 4.5 Stars**

GoSystem Tax RS is priced at the high end because it is arguably the most powerful, comprehensive professional tax preparation system on the market. The system excels at handling extremely complex returns and also shines with its review process management and productivity measurement utilities. As such, the program is geared toward firms with clients whose returns are extensive and where the practice can benefit from the reduced strain on IT resources by implementing an online tax solution. Practices with these characteristics will benefit the most from GoSystem Tax RS through streamlined processes and increased productivity.

## **2006 Overall Rating — 5 Stars**

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