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ACCOUNTING

2009 Review of Small Business Accounting Systems: Tier II (Programs Over \$1,000)

One Size Does Not Fit All: Client Accounting Systems Offer Varied Functions

Mary Girsch-Bock • Jun. 01, 2009

From the June 2009 Issue

Editor's Note: *The review of Tier I systems (those costing less than \$1,000 for a five-user license) was in the [April 2009 issue](#).*

Last month, in a four-mile radius surrounding my house, five small businesses opened in spite of the financial problems our country continues to struggle through. Even in a struggling economy, businesses will continue to open, grow and expand, and it's important that they utilize the tools that are available, both as a one-person owned business and as a growing and expanding entity.

In the last issue of this magazine, we reviewed Small Business Accounting products with a price tag of less than \$1,000 for a complete core accounting product that included GL, AP, AR and Payroll functionality (see www.CPATechAdvisor.com/go/2306).

This month, we continue the Small Business Accounting review by looking at products that range in price up to \$5,500.

This opens up the category considerably and lets us look at products that are really designed for small businesses in transition; such as businesses experiencing growth, or those with multiple users and/or locations. These products are generally a step above the products reviewed in the Tier 1 group last issue, offering a more powerful system with quicker response times, more features and extended functionality.

As always, we will look at the vital areas of these products, hopefully simplifying the decision-making process of finding the right product for you or your client's business. The areas we looked at in this review are as follows:

Ease of Use/Basic Functionality. This area is so important, particularly for the small business owner who seldom has the time or patience to spend weeks learning complicated accounting software. We look at items such as basic system setup, tutorials and setup wizards, and user interface screens. Basic functionality includes a summary of useful features and functions that are found in each particular product and how they can benefit your client's business.

Core Accounting/Security Functions. This area looks at what the product will do. All of these products will contain basic accounting functions such as GL, AP, AR and Payroll, but we also recognize the additional options and features that are available, either with the core product or as an add-on. For instance, if you have a service business an Inventory module may not be important, but if you have a gift shop it will be a necessity. Security options are also important, particularly for those with multiple system users where security is stressed.

Reporting & Management Functions. This is an important area, and it's difficult if not impossible to determine the true financial status of a business without solid reports. We look at the various reporting options, the ability to email or save reports in different formats, and whether reports can be customized as needed. Management functions have also grown in importance. Just a few years ago, business snapshot reports and dashboards were only found in Enterprise-level products, but they are now common in many small business accounting products, as well. These management tools can help both business owners and accountants keep a good handle on business.

Import/Export/Integration. For those businesses with a need for more flexibility, this area can be a great determinant. Can data be imported from a prior accounting product? Can business contacts be imported? Can data

be exported into a spreadsheet or word processing document? Does the software integrate with a good variety of third-party products?

Help & Support Options. Many people don't really expect to have to use telephone or email support, but they want to know that it's there if needed. Many times, a decent Help file can answer many of the questions new users have.

Relative Value. If you're a small business owner just starting out, you may be in the market for a product that helps you keep track of your transactions and gives you accurate reports. If you're a larger business or experiencing a growth spurt, you may not be ready for Enterprise-level software, but you do need something more than the entry-level products detailed in the last issue. You need something that can help you make the business decisions that are vital to your company. That's what these Tier 2 products are designed to do.

[A-Systems Corporation](#) —

[A-Systems Visual Bookkeeper Preferred Edition](#)

With Visual Bookkeeper-Preferred Edition, A-Systems targets small business owners who are looking for a product a step above the typical entry-level products.

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[Acumatica](#)

SIDEBAR: With Acumatica's first release still in the Beta stages, we were unable to include a full review of the product here, but be sure to look for it in the very near future. This is a browser-based product that can be utilized in a SaaS (Software as a Service) model or hosted in-house, allowing it to be conveniently accessed from anywhere with an Internet connection

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[Cougar Mountain Software](#) —

[CMS Professional 2009 Accounting](#)

CMS Professional 2009 Accounting from Cougar Mountain

Software is ideally suited to small to mid-sized businesses looking for a step above off-the-shelf accounting programs.

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CYMA Systems — CYMA Accounting Software

. CYMA is a completely modular system that is a good fit for businesses in transition, or those looking to purchase a solid core accounting system now with the capability to add to that system in the future.

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eTEK International — eTEK for Microsoft Office

A privately owned business, *eTEK* has consistently offered accounting and job costing software to companies of all sizes. Its scalable product line ranges in scope from single-user systems to those powered by powerful Microsoft SQL.

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Intacct Corporation — Intacct Small Business

Intacct Small Business provides users with the perfect step up from entry-level products. Offered as a Software as a Service (SaaS) product, Intacct is ideally suited for small businesses looking to expand flexibility with their software options.

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Intuit, Inc. — QuickBooks Enterprise Solutions 9.0

As QuickBooks continues to maintain market share with its small business accounting products, it also continues to push

the envelope with products designed not only to fit smaller operations, but those that fit well in growing operations as well.

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NetSuite — NetSuite

NetSuite offers a completely integrated system that includes a complete set of financials along with industry-specific applications such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Order Management and Fulfillment, Inventory Management, eCommerce, and Employee Productivity.

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Red Wing Software — CenterPoint

Accounting

Designed for the small business owner, CenterPoint offers real-time transaction processing and provides users with an excellent entry-level product that can be easily upgraded to the more robust TurningPoint if and when necessary.

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Red Wing Software — TurningPoint

Accounting Software

TurningPoint Accounting Software is an excellent accounting product for smaller to mid-sized businesses looking to upgrade from an entry-level product. TurningPoint modules can be purchased separately or as a core suite of financial products.

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Sage Software — Peachtree

by Sage Quantum Accountants Edition 2010

Sage Quantum Accountants Edition varies somewhat in that it is designed for professional accountants who wish to manage their clients' books electronically.

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[Softrak Systems, Inc. —](#)

[Adagio Accounting](#)

Adagio Accounting is geared toward small to mid-sized companies looking for better reporting and customization capability. Currently priced at \$1,500 per module, that price also includes all product upgrades and maintenance for 15 months.

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2009 Review of Small Business Accounting Systems: Tier II (Over \$1,000) — Comparison Chart

Mary began her career as an accountant in the property management industry, later moving into the healthcare industry. She is now a freelance writer specializing in business and technology issues and is the author of her first book, several HR handbooks, training manuals, and other in-house publications. She can be reached at marygirschbock@cpata.com.

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