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Much like the entities that will utilize them, nonprofit software products vary in breadth and scope. While smaller nonprofits and smaller government entities

have no need for the bells and whistles of more sophisticated specialized software, larger nonprofits definitely do. The IRS Form 990 has been completely redesigned and began use for tax year 2008. Though the new form has only two more pages than its predecessor, it also now has 16 accompanying schedules ranging from Public Charity Status and Public Support to Supplemental Financial Statements to Supplemental Information Regarding Fundraising or Gaming Activities, and so on.

Obviously, most nonprofits will not be required to file all 16 schedules, but the point is that IRS filing requirements and FASB 117 Financial Statement requirements for nonprofits means that the assistance of solid nonprofit software will definitely make the nonprofit's life easier.

Of course, the other side of the nonprofit that needs a solid software system is fundraising and donor tracking. A solid, accurate donor base is a necessity for a nonprofit of any size. And without it, the agency stands little chance of performing the work that others may depend on.

The products reviewed here range from basic, entry-level fund products to enterprise-level nonprofit solutions that easily handle everything from fund allocation to donor tracking. Most fall somewhere in between.

The following categories were considered in each product review:

Ease of Use/Flexibility. I've spoken with countless

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phase.

Features/Functionality. What does this software do that sets it apart from the competition? How easy is it to perform those necessary functions? Also, what are some of the new features that have recently been added to the product?

Reporting. Will the product produce the reports (Form 990 and FASB 117) that every nonprofit must be able to produce. What about management reports? Can reports be customized or exported to Excel or saved as a PDF file? How do the product's reporting capabilities set it apart from other products?

Support/Help. Is a solid Help function available? Are users able to reach support personnel when needed? What are the support options?

Relative Value. This particular section is pretty relative (as noted in the section title), but we look at the cost of the product versus what a nonprofit will get for that price. If a system provides extensive features and functionality, but those features aren't really utilized properly at your NFP client's organization, or if the product does not provide the data needed for the NFP to survive and thrive, the relative value is low. However, if a different organization purchases the more robust and feature-rich system, and it meets the needs of that organization, then the relative value is high.

Be sure to advise your clients to take the time to visit the vendor websites for more information and product demos. Have them try out a few, and then help them make their decision. How well the program suits your client's nonprofit

organization will determine its value and ultimately the success of the organization

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several new features along with powerful system functionality.

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Blackbaud – The Financial Edge

The Financial Edge from Blackbaud is primarily designed for mid-sized to large nonprofit organizations that require transparency and accountability in their actions. However, the vendor has just recently released a small business version.

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Blackbaud – Fundware

Now a Blackbaud product, Fundware (formerly Kintera Fundware) continues to offer nonprofit organizations and government entities solid fund accounting functionality. Designed for mid-sized nonprofits and government entities, Fundware provides users with an excellent, scalable product that offers the flexibility that organizations desire.

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Cougar Mountain Software – CMS

Professional 2010 FUND

CMS Professional 2010 FUND for Nonprofits from Cougar Mountain Software provides nonprofit and accounting functionality to small to mid-sized nonprofit organizations and government entities.

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CYMA Systems, Inc. – CYMA Not-for-Profit Fund Accounting Software

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FUND E-Z Development Corporation has offered nonprofit software for 20 years. The latest release, Version 10, offers a completely rewritten software product that is now a client/server application utilizing MS/SQL Express 2005.

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[GMS, Inc. – GMS Accounting & Financial Management System](#)

GMS was designed specifically to provide accounting and financial management functionality for nonprofits that receive and maintain numerous grants throughout the year. System requirements to run GMS are minimal, but installation of Microsoft Access or SQL Server is necessary prior to in-stalling GMS.

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[Intuit – QuickBooks Premier Nonprofit Edition](#)

With QuickBooks' dedicated focus on small businesses, it's no secret that it has quickly become the product of choice for small business owners. When Intuit began adding industry-specific versions and opening up the product through its SDK, it spread to even more markets.

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[Sage – Peachtree by Sage Premium Accounting for Nonprofits 2010](#)

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sector, Sage MIP Fund Accounting continues to offer a solid fund product which continually provides frequent product enhancements designed to increase the value of the product.

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Serenic Software – Serenic Navigator

Serenic Navigator is a powerful financial software designed for nonprofit organizations, public sector entities and NGOs. The vendor has successfully combined a strong core system with Microsoft Dynamics NAV to create a powerful, yet easy-to-use product. Serenic Navigator is optimally designed for use in larger organizations.

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2009 Review of Not-for-Profit Accounting Systems — Comparison Chart

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