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From the April/May 2010 Review of [Professional Tax Systems \(Advanced Workflow\)](#).

For

those who might have missed the news back in October 2009, CCH has launched a completely redesigned and web-based version of its collection of professional accounting, tax compliance and practice management programs. The next generation

of ProSystem *fx* Suite offers many of the traditionally installed ProSystem *fx* programs as a pure software-as-a-service (SaaS) offering, including the vendor's Tax, Document and Practice systems, plus the new Workstream and Portal solutions.

The next generation of ProSystem *fx* Suite combines all of the benefits of a SaaS system with a Smart Client, allowing more streamlined workflow processes and a comprehensive feature set, plus the advantage of anywhere/anytime remote access. In addition to this monumental change, the system offers features not found in previous versions of ProSystem *fx*, including a single login for all of the programs in the suite, a common client database, more advanced accessibility and collaboration features, dashboards and a new administration management center.

CORE PRODUCT FUNCTIONS/FEATURES:

The new SaaS model of ProSystem *fx* still retains the core compliance capabilities of the system, offering modules for comprehensive support for all entities with annual income reporting requirements (1040, 1041, 1065, 1120, 1120S, 990, 706, 709 and 5500), as well as all states. It also provides integrated

unlimited e-filing and extensive multi-state filing functions for individuals

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This is because of the utilization of a Smart Client, while core workflow functions and the back-end compliance engines are located on CCH's servers. Without getting too technical, this "smart client" setup results in an intuitive and fully functional work environment that doesn't have the limitations of a browser. Users can access the tax system either directly or from the Dashboard view, which offers a single interface for working with any of the ProSystem *fx* programs a firm uses. The Dashboard also offers user customization options, displays recent tasks and access to clients, and displays Outlook email, calendaring and to-do lists using an interface that includes components from the Microsoft communications system.

In addition to outstanding user customization options, professionals can work with client returns in several ways, with access available through either the Return Manager or the Client Manager, both of which provide selection lists that can be sorted, filtered or searched using multiple methods. Clients can also be grouped or assigned to specific offices or practice business units, and the management systems offer complete status overviews for returns and staff responsibilities. During client setup tasks, basic information is entered on screens that offer drop-down selection lists, lookups and other smart features, or users can create templates to help streamline data entry for client types or groups that share similar attributes. Additionally, "tooltips" offer information about icons, and users can drag-and-drop frequently used features into a Quick Access Toolbar.

When working within returns, data is entered on interview sheets and form replicas and then transferred to the master client return. The interview sheets and returns offer auto-calculation, copy/paste capabilities, and the option to set tick marks, notes, show items as estimates, view return histories, move between associated returns, drilldown to underlying calculations or spreadsheets,

or even add attachments to return fields. The system offers selection lists

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and storing digital files in addition to integration with the tax, practice management, workflow and portal systems. Each of these programs also offers significant workflow advantages, especially the new ProSystem *fx* Workstream, which provides tools for managing client and staff activities, managerial reporting, strategic notification tools, and integration with CCH's Time Capture, Billing and Accounts Receivables modules.

Other optional modules that enhance the system's paperless workflow capabilities include ProSystem *fx* Scan, which offers functions that can use optical character recognition (OCR) technology to automatically create organized and bookmarked digital (PDF) client binders from scanned in client source documents and, with the AutoFlow add-on, can also pull client data from those scanned documents, let preparers review the data, then import it directly into a client return. Documents that can be scanned and auto-populated into client 1040 returns include W-2s, 1098s, 1099s, Consolidated 1099s, 2439, SSA 1099 and K-1s.

ProSystem *fx* Tax also offers import of apportionment information, K-1 data from other returns and spreadsheets, fixed asset information, and data from Excel spreadsheets. It also offers a GL bridge to business accounting systems and can export data into similar formats.

INTEGRATION:

ProSystem *fx* Tax offers total integration with the other SaaS platform systems in the new suite, most notably with Document, Workstream, Portal and Practice. It also integrates with most of the other programs in the traditional ProSystem *fx* family, such as Scan, Write-Up, Planning and Fixed Assets. Through its GL bridge, it offers the ability to pull financial data from accounting systems and return complete tax information into those programs. The program

also offers impressive integration with the Microsoft Office suite, including

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With the new system, CCH also debuted the new ProSystem *fx* Portal offering, which allows collaboration with clients through a secure and encrypted web-based login, enabling the client and the firm to store and transfer documents and other files that can be designated as read-only or read-write, plus it has a check in/out option and maintains file histories. Since ProSystem *fx* is a SaaS suite, it can be used anywhere, but the required installation of the Smart Client files on the user's computer means that it isn't accessible on any computer or device until installed. At this time, the system does not offer utilities for mobile devices.

SUMMARY & PRICING

The new SaaS version of ProSystem *fx* Tax offers advanced workflow and return preparation capabilities, as well as cutting-edge technological advances that enable greater practice control, staff overview, collaboration and review process management. ProSystem *fx* Tax SaaS is a great advancement in tax compliance for firms with complex clients, reporting requirements and advanced workflow requirements, but as with most advanced systems, training is recommended and provided with every purchase. An all-inclusive version of the tax system with all entities and all states for several professional users would involve an investment of less than \$10,000 per year, with the ability to "pay as you go" or on a subscription basis. Of course, most practices have needs that don't necessitate every available module. The module-based system allows practices to select the entities, states and additional add-on features needed.

2010 OVERALL RATING:

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