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Many accounting firms have begun to use paperless document management systems to streamline their office, and many are now realizing that there is a big opportunity in helping clients benefit from these systems. If your clients are ready to tackle the paperless document management problem, here is a quick listing of several products that are worth considering.

Each of these products solves the “paperless problem” in a slightly different way, and each product is targeted to different customer sets, but all of them help you and your clients create secure electronic file cabinets where documents can be stored, organized and retrieved in digital form. Some use the cloud and some use on-premise databases to manage the documents, so it's important for you to consider what your goals are as you evaluate the document management options.

Document Management Software for QuickBooks

For QuickBooks users, there are several products in the market. Some of the products focus more on automation of the scanning and organizing process, and some go deeper into the documents and apply business rules to initiate a business process. For example, Bill.com takes scanned images of vendor invoices and then provides a complete online Accounts Payable system around those invoices. But products like CNG-Books, SourceLink and PaperSave focus more on scanning, organizing and retrieving documents, and attaching them to accounting transactions.

All of the products listed here provide fairly tight integration with QuickBooks. For example, each (except for Bill.com) provides the user with a prompt to scan and/or attach an existing document to a transaction or list item right when you save a transaction in QuickBooks. With Bill.com, all data entry is done within the Bill.com

online application, which is then synchronized automatically with QuickBooks so

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www.quickbooks.com

The QuickBooks Document Management service lets you attach documents (scanned images or any other document) to your QuickBooks lists and transactions. The documents are uploaded to an Intuit server and synchronized with QuickBooks transactions.

This new Document Management service works with QuickBooks 2010 and QuickBooks Enterprise 10 and above. Since it's an online service, you sign up separately for the service and pay fees (after a free trial period) depending on the amount of storage you need. The first 100MB of storage is free, and then the charges are \$4.95/month for up to 500MB, \$14.95 for up to 1GB, and \$29.95 for up to 5GB.

This new feature of QuickBooks 2010 is integrated into QuickBooks throughout the product via the Attach button that appears on transactions.

Figure 1: The Attach Button is on nearly all transactions and list items in QuickBooks 2010 and above.

You can attach documents in three ways. First, you can attach documents by selecting a local document from your hard disk; second, by scanning a paper document; or by attaching a document from the Online Document Inbox. The Inbox is a place where documents were uploaded previously, but not specifically attached to a transaction or list item.

Figure 2: Adding an attachment with QuickBooks Document Management

The QuickBooks Document Management service from Intuit is a great value for clients with simple document management needs, and those who are interested in documents connected to QuickBooks transactions or lists.

SmartVault

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SmartVault is an online service, complemented by the SmartVault "Toolbar" that runs on the side of QuickBooks. This toolbar is the key differentiation that SmartVault's product gives to the user. By having the simple, consistent, easy (no, obvious!) toolbar, the user immediately knows what the product does, how to use it, and when there are documents already attached to the current list and/or transaction.

Figure 3: The SmartVault Toolbar is always visible, and shows when attachments exist for transactions

With its latest release (version 3), SmartVault has expanded its service outside of the QuickBooks user base and has significantly enhanced the product by allowing you to create a folder and subfolder structure outside of QuickBooks. With this new approach, you can now store all your files securely online, and you can create new folders or just map existing Windows folders directly to SmartVault.

A key feature that accountants will like is that you can invite people to securely share and access documents and folders online. Think about how accountants and clients need access to the same data in order to work efficiently. We've been getting shared data on the Internet for a while now, with products like QuickBooks Online, but now SmartVault is adding shared access to the same document management system.

SmartVault is well on the way to delivering on the concept of a single, online document management solution for all business documents plus providing collaboration for accountants and their clients. And it doesn't matter whether the documents are associated with QuickBooks transactions, with other application data, or not associated with any particular application. By providing the toolbar and integration with the Windows explorer, SmartVault is well positioned to become the

common document management solution people will use for all documents,

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integrated into QuickBooks and provides great features for a reasonable price (\$199 single-user, \$499 for three users, and \$699 for five users).

Figure 4: Attaching a document to a bill with PaperSave

A key feature of PaperSave is that in addition to attaching documents to transactions or list items while you're in QuickBooks, you can also attach Microsoft Office documents to QuickBooks data even when you're NOT inside the QuickBooks application. For example, you can store emails or Word or Excel documents to QuickBooks data while you're using Word, Excel, Outlook or even the Windows explorer.

PaperSave is a LAN-based product, so all of the documents are stored within a SQL Server database on-premise as opposed to uploading the documents to a database in the cloud like you do with SmartVault, QuickBooks Document Management or Bill.com.

Figure 5: Using PaperSave to explore all documents attached to an Employee record

Cabinet NG

www.cabinetng.com

*2008 Awesome QuickBooks Add-on add Sleeter logo

Cabinet NG takes the document management segment way beyond just attaching documents or images to accounting transactions. Along with the broader functionality is a higher price (typical configurations run several thousands of dollars), but if you're looking for a document management system that covers the full range of document storage needs, document automation, and work flow, this is probably the product you need.

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Figure 6: Cabinet NG CNG-SAFE is the central document storage database

A separate application, CNG-BOOKS is the company's integrated solution for QuickBooks. CNG-BOOKS streamlines QuickBooks data entry and document filing into one complete electronic process. Vendor bills, customer payments and credit card statements are brought into CNG-Books as scanned or faxed images. Then, as the user views the image, CNG-BOOKS provides a simple data-entry screen that replaces the need to enter transactions in QuickBooks. As you fill out the data in CNG-BOOKS, you only enter the transaction's unique data while the rest is captured from the QuickBooks file and presented in pull-down menus. As you save each transaction, it is entered in QuickBooks and the image is filed.

Figure 7: CNG-BOOKS automates QuickBooks data entry from scanned images

SourceLink

www.personable.com

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SourceLink is one of the first document management add-ons to QuickBooks. As such, it has some of the most complete features for scanning, storing and retrieving documents attached to QuickBooks data. It is a LAN-based product, and it links and retrieves files stored in the native Windows file system as opposed to a web-based database or a proprietary filing system.

The product is also one of the least expensive solutions. The standard version pricing is \$229 for a single user, \$729 for five users, and \$1,229 for 10 users.

The 2010 version adds a toolbar similar to the SmartVault product, which floats to

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FormCliQ solves a very specific problem in the document management area. The goal of this product is to automate data entry into QuickBooks by scanning documents in, recognize the text on the forms using OCR technology, and then populate QuickBooks transactions, all without the need for human data entry. When I first heard about this product, I said it was impossible; but after seeing it work, I'm pretty impressed. OCR technology will never give 100 percent accuracy, but if you have high-volume, consistent forms (vendor bills for example), and you want to automate the data entry of those transactions into QuickBooks, this product may be just the product you need.

Figure 9: FormCliQ recognizes text on scanned forms and populates transactions directly into QuickBooks

Bill.com

www.bill.com

*2009 Awesome QuickBooks Add-on Sleeter AA logo

Bill.com is not specifically a document management product, but since it automates so many of the business processes that involve paper documents, we're including it here.

For about \$25/month, Bill.com completely automates the bill management and online bill payment processes. It provides a complete system, integrated with QuickBooks, that spans from receiving invoices from vendors (paper or electronic), to entering the payable transactions, to routing bills to management for approvals, to scheduling online bill payments. And of course, since it's based on paperless documents, it also provides the same document management feature of attaching documents to QuickBooks transactions.

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