Office Tools Professional — Practice Management 2013

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From the June 2013 review of practice management systems.

Best Firm Fit: Accounting firms of up to 100 who are seeking a more streamlined workflow for practice management tasks.

Strengths

- Simple, single-screen interface
- Integrated document management capabilities
- A la cart integration point options allow firms to customize solution

Potential Limitations

- Large firms may require more customization

Practice Management 2013 is a solution to assist accounting professionals with end-to-end workflow management. Built around a single-screen interface, Practice Management provides all common practice management features with a unified approach. New this year is a refreshed user interface, direct integration with Microsoft Office products and improved Microsoft Outlook sync capabilities. Also new for the current release are a number of enhancements to the help and support offerings.

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS: 5 Stars

Practice Management 2013 is designed around a single-screen interface separated in

Management 2013 and users with multiple monitors may set this task list on a separate monitor and use it as a daily to do list. Any new task assignments are automatically populated and refreshed in this list.

A unique feature of Practice Management 2013 is a built-in document management repository. Documents of any type may be imported through drag-and-drop technology. Once documents are imported, they are attached to the respective client and may be shared with other users or with clients through the available portal options. All documents may be categorized and may be accessed through Windows Explorer if needed. A new enhancement allows users to print Microsoft Word and Excel documents directly to the document storage repository and assign them to clients.

TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES: 4.75 Stars

Multiple timekeeping options are available in Practice Management 2013 and all time data entered is immediately available for invoicing. Users may post time manually, but the system is designed to prompt users to complete time entry sheets upon finalizing assigned tasks. Timers are available and multiple timers may run concurrently.

Project tracking is included with the software and allows multiple steps, users and time periods to be attached to each project. As work is completed, users simply mark the task as completed and are prompted to post associated time. Users then have the option to move the task on to the next step or user. The to-do list for the next user in the process is then automatically updated to reflect the new task. Once projects are fully completed, they may be automatically generated again for monthly, quarterly or yearly projects.

Practice Management 2013 includes powerful CRM features to help maintain current

expense items and processing the invoice.

New for the current release is progress billing, but users may also bill at flat rates or by hour. Invoice adjustments may be made on each invoice as required and invoices may be setup as simple or complex as required. Invoice templates are provided, but users have the option to create or customize to fit firm needs.

Accounts receivable and collection detail are maintained within Practice Management 2013. Through the available QuickBooks Sync Productivity Tool, users may sync all billing and invoice items with QuickBooks.

MANAGEMENT FEATURES: 4.5 Stars

Practice Management 2013 provides real-time access to all data within the system. This allows managers to quickly view which projects are still outstanding, the current status and which employee is currently assigned to those tasks.

Practice Management 2013 includes a calendar scheduling tool that shows each project and task as it is assigned to users. The interface is similar to Microsoft Outlook and provides a quick visual of current and future work assignments. Through the Outlook Sync Productivity Tool, these schedules may be live linked with Microsoft Outlook to further prompt individuals through calendar reminders.

Access to Practice Management data may be controlled on a user by user basis. All users may view the current status of client projects. Management level users may view and assign tasks to others to better manage workflow requirements. The user rights may be set to only allow users to view the tasks assigned to them. This user right level is helpful for new and seasonal employees.

INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT: 4.25 Stars

Practice Management 2013 has several integration points that are provided with the

QuickBooks Sync.

The Outlook Sync has been greatly enhanced for the current release and now includes options for custom mapping fields for importing and exporting data. Also included are live links with Microsoft Outlook on all contacts and calendar appointments which may be pushed to smartphone users through Microsoft ActiveSync.

QuickBooks Sync allows client information, time data and item codes to be synced between both products. This allows users to invoice out of Practice Management 2013 to maintain a unified invoice system while the underlying accounting data remains complete. Employee time data may also be synced for payroll checks to be processed within QuickBooks.

Other Productivity Tools are available for Lacerte, Intuit ProFile and Demandforce. Online scheduling and time tracking are currently in development and are set to be available in the next major software release(?).

HELP/SUPPORT: 4.5 Stars

Technical support is included with the Practice Management 2013 license cost and covers any problems with installation and product related issues. Multiple user guides are accessible from the in-program Help menu and cover a variety of topics. The user guides have recently been updated and now many include on-demand video assistance instead of plain text support. The videos range from a few seconds to a few minutes in length and provide visual assistance for tasks and functions within Practice Management 2013.

Updates are provided to users on a monthly basis and typically include new features and further product enhancements. Software patches are released occasionally as

user issues arise or security issues are discovered. All updates are included with the

SUMMARY & PRICING

Practice Management 2013 is designed specifically for CPA offices and offers a different view of practice management from the traditional product suite offerings from competitors. A single-screen interface is used throughout the product to create a unified approach to time entry, billing and other administrative functions. Practice Management 2013 is intended for small accounting firms with the typical firm size at 20 employees or less.

Practice Management 2013 is priced per user with a single user priced at $600. Multi-user packages are available in 5 user increments and are offered on a tiered discount model. Client Portal options are priced depending upon storage needs and start at $360 for 5GB of storage space. All other productivity add-ons start at $250, but discounts will apply when more than one add-on is purchased. Annual renewals are priced at 20% of the current published price.

2013 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

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