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Lacerte Tax is the top-tier tax software solution offered by Intuit. Introduced 30 years ago, Lacerte Tax remains supported by Intuit and continues to be a popular tax solution for accounting professionals. New for the current year are significant enhancements to the electronic filing functionality and updates to error diagnostics.

Core Product Functions/Features: 5 Stars

Lacerte Tax supports over 5,700 federal, state and local tax forms across all return entity types. Upon opening Lacerte Tax, users are taken to a client listing that is filtered based on return entity type. One of the unique offerings of the Lacerte Tax interface is direct access to client forms, diagnostics and printing options from this

opening client screen. Lacerte Tax is driven by a worksheet-based data entry design

Returns can be printed to PDF and emailed directly to clients. When performing this task, Lacerte Tax automatically generates a password, based on the social security number or employer identification number and the current ZIP code, and encrypts the document. Email capabilities were introduced in 2012, but only included text generated by Intuit. Lacerte Tax now allows for customized email text to be generated prior to sending the return PDF to a client, which can result in a more personalized touch.

The electronic filing capabilities within Lacerte Tax have also been greatly improved. Efforts have been made to fully convert Lacerte Tax to the Modernized e-File (MeF) platform. Users may now add PDF attachments to electronically filed returns, and electronic filing of returns is now supported year-round. The electronic filing module has been enhanced to provide practitioners with better feedback and guidance for resolving any errors.

Also new this year is full support for the Windows 8 and Internet Explorer 10 platforms. FBAR electronic filing is scheduled for support in April/May 2014 but is still pending final form approval from the Treasury Department's FinCEN department.

Another unique feature to Lacert Tax is the maintenance of a peer-to-peer live community. Users may freely access this resource to post, search and respond to questions posed by other practitioners. This also serves as another platform for program assistance. Intuit has recently added resources to assist tax practitioners with questions related to the Affordable Care Act and maintains a website dedicated to this. New this year, users may subscribe to email updates for knowledgebase articles to keep them up to date on any program changes and feature enhancements.

Integration: 4.5 Stars

Lacerte Tax has tight integration with QuickBooks. Through Intuit SmartMap

A wizard is provided that guides users through importing Schedule D investment activity. Currently, Lacerte Tax supports direct imports for investment activity from Microsoft Excel and CSV file types. With many brokerages supporting Microsoft Excel and CSV export functions, this can significantly reduce manual data entry typically required for this information.

Paperless Workflow: 4.75 Stars

Tax Import is an add-on solution that provides a technology platform to import scanned source documents directly into Lacerte Tax. Support is currently offered for W-2s, most federal K-1s and a variety of popular 1099 types. The process starts by the user scanning the document and then uploading the documents to Intuit. From there, the Intuit team has technology in place that extracts relevant data and formats it for direct import into Lacerte Tax. Intuit uses 128-bit data encryption and typical processing is limited to machine-to-machine intervention and rarely requires human intervention.

In addition to scanned documents, investment data can be downloaded directly into Lacerte Tax from 20 financial institutions. Payroll information can be downloaded directly from ADP and Intuit Payroll Services, with all appropriate Lacerte Tax W-2 fields populated automatically. Tax Import is priced per return, with reduced pricing available when purchased in bundles of 50 or 100 returns.

Lacerte Tax provides additional paperless workflow through the Lacerte Document Management System (Lacerte DMS). From within Lacerte DMS, users have full access to scanned documents, Microsoft Office files and other document types that users have imported. Lacerte DMS may also serve as the starting point for documents uploaded to the Tax Import service noted above.

With the recent addition of over 3,000 error diagnostics, Lacerte Tax currently has

Remote Capabilities: 4 Stars

Intuit only offers Lacerte Tax as a traditional desktop and server/workstation installation option. Remote hosting of Lacerte Tax may be done by users through use of a variety of hosting solutions. Smaller organization without resources dedicated to sophisticated IT staffs and setup may find it cumbersome to maintain this type of infrastructure.

Alternatively, a number of third-party solutions are available that will host Lacerte Tax and other products, such as QuickBooks or Microsoft Office solutions for a monthly fee. Intuit Tax Online, which is a lower-tiered product, is a full Internet-based solution hosted by Intuit. This product has been reviewed separately with the traditional tax workflow product reviews.

Summary & Pricing

Lacerte Tax is the most comprehensive tax software solution offered by Intuit. Lacerte Tax is designed for accounting firms servicing clients with a wide array of needs and complexity. Several key features were added over the past year as a direct result of customer feedback. Lacerte Tax is typically priced through unlimited return modules, but returns may still be purchased individually. Unlimited processing for individuals, including federal, one state and electronic filing is currently listed just under $5,000. Other modules are available through a la carte pricing and pricing will vary depending on complexity of the module.

BEST FIRM FIT

Accounting firms servicing clients with a wide array of complexity and firms currently relying on QuickBooks for client recordkeeping

STRENGTHS

2014 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars