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CS.ThomsonReuters.com

Thomson Reuters offers the Practice CS system as a part of its CS Professional Suite of tax, accounting and business management programs, providing an overall practice management application that includes time and billing, productivity analysis, staff management functions, contact management with Outlook integration, and project management capabilities. The system integrates with other components of the CS Professional Suite, most notably the tax, engagement, document management and trial balance systems, to provide a comprehensive system for managing firm workflow, client tasking and collaboration. The system's Staff Management Module received one of *The CPA Technology Advisor's* 2010 Tax & Accounting Technology Innovation Awards. This review is of the installed version of the Practice CS system, which is also available as a leased SaaS application.

Basic System Functions

Practice CS opens into the familiar interface shared by most of the programs in the CS Professional Suite, with a vertical menu on the left offering access to the key program areas, along with pull-down menus and icons across the top of the screen. Since the system was redesigned using the .NET platform, the interface offers excellent customizability and intuitive navigation, plus a very crisp appearance. The key work areas for users, depending on their access rights and role within the practice, are available in the left menu, with the ability to access firm, staff and client activities. Each of these function areas include dashboards that offer summary data specific to the client, staff member or firm activity.

Day-to-day functions, such as entering time and expenses, managing calendar items and accessing client contact data all occur on very intuitive screens that provide simple entry and quick drilldown access to underlying data. The program is

specifically designed for the workflow and client management needs of professional

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customization capability. Additional methods of timekeeping include an automated desktop timer that can be used with any program and an Integrated Entries feature, which provides a web-based component for mobile staff. Management features for time and expense reporting include an approval process.

Practice CS offers strong project management capabilities, including multiple dashboards that help track project due dates, WIP and completions, while also keeping track of staff availability and individual and team performance. Staff can customize their own dashboards to help maintain productivity and workflow, while management tools provide greater insight into firm processes. Client management functions give streamlined control over all aspects of client engagements and projects, with the ability to track all work and communication activities, including email, phone calls, meetings and invoicing, with the data easily searchable. The system syncs with Microsoft Office in real-time to provide accurate contact information and track time spent.

Practice CS has the most comprehensive staff management capabilities of any system designed for accounting professionals, with the ability to track staff billable hours against budgeted or targets, and to track and schedule projects, set up reminders, quickly view staff calendars for multiple staff or groups, and assign tasks to work queues based on staff availability and qualifications. The Staff Management Module also provides strong HR functions, enabling the tracking of staff benefits such as paid time off, comp time, holidays and other accruals, as well as tracking CPE and other custom data. 4.75

Invoicing Functions

The billing functions in Practice CS provide support for flat-fee, progress-based or time-based billing environments, including firms who bill against client retainers. The system does not offer a dedicated purchase order management utility, but can

manage various client billing types, including work-in-progress and compare

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enabling firms to customize data collection fields to meet their workflow needs. 4.75

Management Features

Practice CS has dashboard views for practice areas, including staff, client and firm management functions, as well as a home dashboard that can be customized by each user, with the ability to even add RSS news feeds from websites, and add links to external sources. Staff-specific dashboards can also be customized to allow employees to view their work tasks, schedule, projects, Outlook email integration and other items.

The system offers extensive time and billing reporting, with customizable invoices and statements, as well as the ability to create reports or to customize the standard available reports, which include options for production, billing, collections, reconciliations, listings, and departmental summaries. Reports can be saved as PDFs for paperless management. Security features allow access rights to be limited based on clients, workgroups or even specific system functions. 5

Integration & Data Management

Practice CS offers extensive integration with the other programs in the CS Professional Suite, including the vendor's tax, portals, engagement and document management applications. Additionally, the system synchs with Microsoft Outlook for contact management and, with the Solutions Portlet utility on the Client Dashboard, can link other documents and materials to client folders, including Word and Excel files or Checkpoint and other online sources. The system does not offer direct integration with outside accounting programs, and direct data output to PDF, XLS, RTF, TXT, HTML and TIFF formats), along with the ability to email invoices and client communications directly from within the system. Practice CS also offers remote time and expense data-entry options and is the first professional practice

management system to offer an electronic credit card client payment option

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online user community and program updates, which can be scheduled to automatically download. Live technical support is included in system pricing. 5

Summary & Pricing

For professional practices seeking a comprehensive suite of accounting, tax and client service programs, the CS Professional Suite has virtually everything in its fully integrated, consistent and streamlined offering. Practice CS offers exceptional tools for managing staff time, productivity, expenses, clients and projects, and offers extensive reporting options. Pricing starts at about \$1,800 for a five-user license, with the project, client and staff management modules available as add-on features.

2010 Overall Rating 4.75

Technology

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