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maximize efficiency.

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Apr. 23, 2016

From the 2016 Reviews of Professional Tax Preparation Systems.

Best Firm Fit: Mid-sized and smaller accounting and tax firms processing primarily 1040s but with some business entities.

Strengths

- Offers fast and easy-to-learn data entry screens
- Strong direct integration with QuickBooks and import-export processes with third party software
- Bank refund products, pay-by-refund and partnership with American Express for refund debit cards
- Newly-added data collection and e-signature tools

Potential Limitations

- Is not offered as a remotely accessible solution, and no mobile apps

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management return tracking, data collection, client collaboration, tax planning and document management The system includes more than 3,200 tax forms and schedules, including 1040, 1041, 1065, 1120, 1120s, 706, 709 and 990, and state equivalents.

The system's interface uses intuitive data entry screens that include numerous heads-down shortcuts, plus line-by-line help and access to form instructions. The program automatically calculates and transfers data to form fields and related schedules and worksheets, and a help system offers real-time guidance based on the tax form or input field. The Missing Client Data Utility in ProSeries uses a client's prior year return and diagnostics to find data that may be missing, then prepares a client email to remind them. The list updates as missing client data has been added. The Client Checklist can also be used to create a custom list of necessary documents.

ProSeries includes a client billing utility and the ability to set up options based on flat or time-based fees, or per-form charges. A time-clock feature can also be used. E-filing is included and a client return manager makes it easy to track the status of returns. Presentation features include the ability to include charts and graphs, and comparisons with previous years, with final client returns.

The Professional version of ProSeries also includes a tax planner, a Client Snapshot feature with tax strategy suggestions, the ability to create and send client returns as PDF attachments from within the program, and an option to create Married Joint returns with separate residence states for each spouse.

New for the most recent tax year, ProSeries included a tool to streamline practice setup, as well as the Intuit Link tool, which gives firms an automated way to determine what data the firm still needs from clients, alerts the clients, and offers a secure and easy portal for them to send to the firm. The new Client Benefit Suite includes payment options for clients (pay-by-refund and debit card refunds), and an

optional ID theft and audit representation service. The system also added e-signature

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to a client's 1040. Firms can also use the optional ProSeries Fixed Asset Manager add-on. Asset depreciation data can be directly imported to Schedules C and E.

Paperless Workflow: 4.75

One of the most time-saving and accuracy-protecting features in ProSeries is its Financial Institution Download feature, which can securely import client Schedule B and D data such as forms 1099-B, 1099-INT and 1099-DIV. ProSeries users can also take advantage of the Scan and Import utility, through which the firm scans client documents and uploads them to a secure Intuit server, where they are put through optical character recognition, organized into engagement format, and then can be downloaded as digital workpapers by the firm. The data can then be directly imported into ProSeries.

Intuit also recently partnered with DocuSign to add e-signature capabilities, thus speeding up the process of obtaining Form 8879 signatures from clients. Other features designed to reduce paper-based workflows include the ability to export returns to secure PDF format.

Remote Capabilities: 4.25

The ProSeries system is designed to be installed on a workstation or across a firm's server, and thus, it is not accessible remotely unless the frim uses a third-part application hosting provider. The system also does not have any available mobile apps.

However, there are a few tools within the tax program that offer remote capabilities, including the document storage functions. Firms using the optional SmartVault integration can access documents that have been securely stored in the cloud-based system. The program also offers the Financial Institution Download feature, the

Intuit Link tool, and a task scheduler that automatically downloads

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system pricing.

Summary & Pricing

ProSeries provides an attractively-priced and strong, mid-level professional tax compliance system, with advanced integration and data collection tools that can streamline preparation workflow. The system is available in several bundles, the most comprehensive of which is ProSeries Professional 1040 Complete. Priced at $1,748, it supports any number of users and includes unlimited federal and state 1040 processing. Business returns can be added as needed or bundled as an unlimited option. The Basic Unlimited version includes unlimited federal and state returns for four states, and is priced at $1,037.

2016 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

Software • Taxes

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