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Used by millions worldwide, QuickBooks has expanded its hold on the small business industry by introducing the "Choose an Edition" option, which allows users to choose from seven different industry types when installing the software. This provides users with the ability to access the correct chart of accounts and feature headings. While this product may not be suitable for larger construction companies or contractors, QuickBooks has done a good job of adding industry-specific construction features.

Basic System Functions

QuickBooks has always been an easily navigated product and remains so in the 2010 version. Centers are the main navigation tool used, but a drop-down menu is available at the top of the screen, as well. Custom options allow users to define the interface to suit their needs, so while utilizing all navigational tools can clutter the main screen, users can easily remove some of the unnecessary items if desired. Data-entry screens are similar throughout the product and are easily navigated, with numerous tools and options available in each screen. The company snapshots function allows users to choose as much content as desired on-screen. Company preferences can be entered during setup or when needed, and the optional remote access service can be utilized in order to access the system from any location. 4.5

Core Accounting Capabilities

QuickBooks Premier offers complete accounting functionality, with GL, AP, AR and PR. All GL transactions are entered through the company function, and AP and AR is

well suited to the construction/contracting field, with appropriate vocabulary

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Construction/Contractor-Specific Features

QuickBooks allows for customized estimates, saving of estimate templates for future use with other jobs, and editing of an existing estimate for current customers. Users can also choose to enter multiple estimates for each job. Estimates can also be emailed or converted to an invoice, when necessary. Job-related reports allow for the tracking of project costs, as well as for comparing estimates versus actual and tracking profitability for each job. Change order information can be added to any estimates already in QuickBooks. Information can also be added or edited as each job progresses. Subcontractor payments and expenses can be tracked by creating a separate service item. Users can also track subcontractor time, either with or without using the time tracking feature.

All customer, vendor and employee information can be tracked through the QuickBooks centers. All transactions within each center are grouped by type and are easily accessible with a single click. While providing decent tracking information, centers also allow users to enter new transactions. QuickBooks offers excellent Inventory functionality, which can be easily activated through the edit preferences option. Users can enter part numbers, unit of measure, preferred vendor and re-order point. For further tracking, users can also create user-defined custom fields. The Purchase Order feature allows for entering vendors on the fly, creating a custom purchase order template and adding a vendor message if desired. 3.75

Reporting & Management Tools

QuickBooks offers a solid selection of job-related reports, including the Job Profitability Detail, which provides information to determine exactly where the profit is coming from. The Profit & Loss by Job gives users an accurate picture of what jobs are making money. The Job Progress Invoices versus Estimates gives users a financial report every step of the job. The Report Center makes it easy to quickly

process reports, which can be emailed or exported to Excel. Templates can be easily

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Integration/Import/Export

QuickBooks easily imports data using a text file format. Data can also be exported directly into Excel. Data import options are similar, with data able to be imported using Excel or a CSV file. Data files such as customers, vendors and transactions can also be exported to Excel or a CSV file. Users can import data using these same types of files, but the data will need to be modified prior to importing. QuickBooks also integrates with a wide selection of third-party products designed to work with QuickBooks, as well as starter websites and the Intuit Sync Manager, which keeps files accurate. 4.5

Help/Support

Numerous Help options are available throughout, including the learning tutorials, QuickBooks Help and the New Business Checklist. Links are also available to assist users in finding a local expert, as well as the QuickBooks online support option. System updates can be automatically downloaded anytime as users is online; a message will simply appear asking if you wish to download the updates now or later.

QuickBooks has an outstanding user community, made up of users, experts and accountants, along with QuickBooks support personnel. The site is easily searched, with answers to many questions quickly available along with the ability to ask a question. QuickBooks support is available in varying levels, with lower-end support usually routed to call centers around the world. Escalated security is usually U.S.-based, and includes payroll support. QuickBooks also makes it easy to use local experts, providing access to QuickBooks certified support personnel in client areas. 4.75

Summary & Pricing

QuickBooks Premier 2010 is available for \$399.95 for a single-user system, \$749.95

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