

Accounting Editions Augment Small Business Software

Accounting software is vital to almost any business. Larger firms can have their accounting software written especially for their organization. Small- and mid-size firms generally use one of the packaged products available in the market. This month, we have taken a look at five such packages. We thought you would like to hear what the vendors and users of these products have to say about them.

Peachtree

"The new Peachtree 2007 product line contains several enhancements of particular interest to accountants," said Ed Cheeseman, vice president, Sage Software Accountants Network. "Several new features such as spreadsheet-like budgeting and expanded Microsoft Excel integration will be useful functionality for accountants with Peachtree clients. Also, an updated, user-friendly interface and streamlined navigation will make working with Peachtree even easier than before.

"In addition, with the introduction of the Peachtree Quantum product, we have created a Peachtree Quantum Accountants' Edition available exclusively through our Sage Software Accountants Network program," continued Cheeseman. "This edition is able to open and process all versions of Peachtree 2007 including the core products, the vertical versions, and the new Peachtree Quantum product. This brings a new level of convenience to accountants and continues our program of offering a single, unified version for their use in servicing their clients."

Paula Gilliland of Physimetrics, Inc.—a Peachtree customer—said, "Peachtree 2007 is amazing! The information is right there at your fingertips,"

MS Small Business Accounting 2006

"Our clients need an accounting solution that integrates CRM data with financial data and helps employees access and share that information," said Jason Harrison, owner of Harrison Technology Consulting. "With Microsoft SBA 2006, which integrates with Microsoft Office Edition's core programs—including Microsoft Office Outlook 2003 with Business Contact Manager, we can deploy an accounting solution in a network environment to increase information sharing, drive productivity, and boost our clients' satisfaction."

Jerry Mercer, president of Andean Financial Services says of MS Small Business Accounting 2006, "The combination of the easy-to-use interface, easy to access accounting tools, and consolidated view of company information in Small Business Accounting 2006 has helped increase our productivity on accounting tasks by 25 percent, which helps serve existing clients more efficiently and creates more capacity to take on additional clients."

Intuit QuickBooks

"No one serves small business and accountants better than Intuit; for nearly 15 years we have remained laser-focused on ease, continuously improving the market-leading small business management platform," said Brad Smith, senior vice president of Intuit's Small Business Division. "At the same time, we have developed a powerful mix of integrated services that help better connect our customers with their clients, vendors, partners and employees."

More specific detail is given by Tom Mitchell, CFO of HBH Pet Products in Springville, Utah. "To meet the needs of large retailers, we were spending two to three hours a day manually calculating and converting quantities. We have different shipping requirements for each retailer and any error in shipping results in shipping error fees. QuickBooks gives us the peace of mind to know that we have shipped out what our customers want, when they want it."

NetSuite

"For a growing company with limited IT resources, a piecemeal approach to its internal systems can be a major hindrance," said Mini Peiris, vice president of Product Management. "With NetSuite, small and midsize companies get one integrated system that lets them do business like the industry titans -- without the IT headaches."

A user of NetSuite, Susan Casebeer, CFO, Southwest Windpower, based in Flagstaff, Ariz. made this observation, "By using NetSuite we have our sales orders, shipment, and accounting functions all on one screen. We immediately see what other internal departments are doing, and can make decisions more readily and effectively."

—By Bernard Rossell

Accountants Reveal Small Business Software Benefits



Small Business

NetSuite

NetSuite **50**

Intuit QuickBooks

Premier Accountant Edition 2007 **51**

Microsoft

MS Small Business Accounting 2006 **52**

Sage Software

Peachtree **53**

Integrates Your Accounting System With Your Website

By Bernard Rossell

Here is a product that is different from the others reviewed in this issue. Rather than being a software package *you* install, NetSuite operates from a website.

NetSuite consists of four main components: Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) with accounting and personnel functions, including payroll; Ecommerce, order processing and website management; and Business intelligence/real-time dashboards.

Features

There are some distinct advantages to a web-based architecture. First, you don't have to worry about installation. All of the software is on NetSuite's server, although there may be some adjustments needed to your browser at startup time. Next, you don't have to do a thing when updates are made to the application.



NetSuite representatives told me that updates are normally done over a weekend, so that when you login to the system on a Monday after an update, you are logging in to the newest release. There are announcements to inform you of any changes that may affect your interface.

The files of your organization are available only to you and your employees, and you can limit the screens used according to roles. In other words, you can set up your system so that the warehouse manager in the Western Region cannot make changes to the chart of accounts.

The first area a user encounters is the dashboard, a home screen that can be customized by selecting appropriate portlets – small special purpose programs. When you first login, your dashboard will have a default set of portlets. Click “Customize this Page” to see a list of portlets from which you make your selections, and click Save. The new selections appear on your dashboard, which you can organize by dragging and dropping.

One type of portlet is called a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). KPI's come in various flavors and can be displayed as graphics. A high level manager might, for example, want to have a graph that shows sales by month. Other fairly standard



choices for display on the dashboard include a calendar, lists of events and tasks, and other tools that help organize the day.

Issue Management, another feature in NetSuite, provides the same function as problem resolution or troubleshooting, and it is part of CRM.

The designers of NetSuite included an eCommerce component as well. Since the accounting parts of NetSuite can already manage inventory control, order management and customer billing, designers made the connection so customers can market their services through a website, too. NetSuite leases space on its web servers and provides tools, such as the ever-present shopping cart facility and checkout procedure so firms that use NetSuite can establish a domain and market their services.

NetSuite provides the ever-present shopping cart facility and checkout procedures so firms can establish a domain and market their services.

Summary

If I were to suggest an area in NetSuite that could benefit from additional work, it would be the internal documentation. It's not easy to find what might be referred to as End User Documentation that explains the product and features in high-level terms. However, this is a minor glitch in an otherwise solid program that truly uses the power of the Internet to operate and function.

NetSuite

www.netsuite.com
650-627-1000

QuickBooks: Premier Accountant Edition 2007 Fills in Many Fields For You



By Bernard Rossell

Intuit got its QuickBooks: Premier Accountant Edition 2007 to us just in time to make this issue. It is due to be released about the time this review is in your hands, or shortly after.

Features

Many of the features are beneath the surface, but are designed to make the product more effective. One efficient feature remembers how you perform routine tasks; as a result, QuickBooks can fill in many fields for you. There is also a finer detail of expense classifications that, again, remembers your prior usage. The synchronization of contact information between Microsoft Outlook and QuickBooks keeps everyone in step with up-to-date contacts. The software has easier capabilities



The new Accountant's Copy feature improves the exchange of data and the communication between the client and the accountant. It allows the client to select a dividing date and create a copy of their accounting records for the accountant. The client can then continue to operate their business and work on their accounting in the current period while the accountant works simultaneously on the accounting in a prior period without the press of the client waiting for their file back. It also gives the accountant the ability to make a wider range of adjustments to the client's accounting records. When the accountant has completed their work they can send back their changes for the client to review and automatically import into their own file.

QuickBooks has integrated faster, more flexible search capabilities via integration with Google Desktop™, as well as Google Marketing Tools™ such as Google AdWords and Google Maps. The new Google Desktop™ feature allows you to quickly search QuickBooks to find the customer, vendor or financial information needed by just typing in a few key words.

One thing that impressed me very much about QuickBooks 2007 is its excellent Learning Center, which was added in 2006. The Learning Center is available at all times through the Help system, which appears automatically when you open



Small Business

a company. This happens with companies you create and the sample companies QuickBooks provides as examples.

The Learning Center offers a list of tutorials, most of which have an audio description of what is being shown on the screens. The lower-level tutorials tend to be interactive, with the audio describing what needs to be entered on a sample screen and prompting you to key in a value. QuickBooks keeps track of the tutorials you have seen by entering a checkmark next to the name of the tutorial.

You can handle your company payroll manually without subscribing to one of the three payroll services offered by

The new Accountant's Copy allows the client to select a dividing date and create a copy of their accounting records for the accountant.

Intuit. The problem is that you have to calculate payroll taxes by hand for each paycheck you cut, and your calculation is not carried forward from one pay period to the next. It would seem that the only circumstance under which that might be feasible is if you are a sole proprietorship with no employees.

Intuit offers Payroll Services in four levels: Standard, Enhanced, Assisted and Complete. All four are in-house systems. Standard and Enhanced offer many of the same features. They both preserve your initial entries for use in future pay periods; set up the schedule for your pay periods; take care of other payroll liabilities, such as health insurance and worker's comp; and handle direct deposits into employees' bank accounts. The main difference is that Standard includes access to federal forms, while Enhanced includes access to both federal and state forms. Assisted is the top-level in-house system, which handles set up of your payroll, payment of payroll liabilities and submission of tax forms. The user is only responsible for entering hours and cutting paychecks. There is also QuickBooks Payroll Complete if you want your entire payroll, tax deposits and filings done for you.

Summary

Intuit continues to add great enhancements and additional features time and time again. The many tutorials offered through the Learning Center help the user make the most out of all the available tools and features offered by QuickBooks.

Intuit

www.quickbooks.com
888-729-1996

Users Can Reuse Data Entered in Excel or MS Outlook

By Bernard Rossell

Microsoft Small Business Accounting 2006 comes as part of Microsoft (MS) Office Small Business Management Edition 2006 and as a stand-alone product. MS Office includes such tried-and-true favorites as MS Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint. If you have not been using those applications, or if your present versions are a little out of date, you should install them before installing the Small Business Accounting 2006 application. This is done automatically when you use Installation Disc 1 in the package.

Features

The package comes with a great deal of documentation, including the Small Business Accounting 2006 User's Guide, a book called *Microsoft Office Your Way* by Katherine Murray. The guide suggests how the applications that make up MS Office can be used by a small business. A folder labeled *Get Started*



Now contains two Quick Start Guides. Also included is a book called *Small Business Accounting 2006 Do More*, a catalog of forms and checks, and most importantly, a package with two CDs and a Product Key for each.

Disc 2 has updates to MS Office Business Contact Manager, Service Pack 1 for MS Office and MS Small Business Accounting 2006.

The operations of MS Small Business Accounting 2006 take place in one of the six functional areas – Company, Customers, Vendors, Employees, Banking and Reports. Each functional area has its own home page, the center panel of which is designed to look like a flow diagram.

The left-hand column of each home page is called the Navigation Pane. This area contains the Start a Task function, the Find function and six Navigation Buttons that let you go quickly from one functional area to another.

The Reports functional area is set up slightly different in that the Navigation Pane has a Reports area that lists the types of reports available. When you click on a type, a list of available



reports is displayed in the next column. The Reports area also has a button to display the list of saved reports.

There are alternatives for navigating the system. The functional areas are included in the menu bar across the top of your screen. Clicking on a functional area in the menu bar drops down a list of tasks, including going to the home page of that functional area. The User's Guide lists keystrokes for accomplishing just about any of the tasks that you can do by pointing and clicking with your mouse. Many people, particularly those whose job requires them to constantly enter data into the software, find that navigation is quicker using keystrokes.

Users can reuse data entered in other programs, such as Excel or Microsoft Outlook, saving time and eliminating data re-entry error. Data from Small Business Accounting 2006, such as quotes and invoices, can be exported to Microsoft Office Word for consistent documents. Reports can be created and then exported to Excel, maintaining all of their formatting, for deeper analysis and calculations.

The customizable Company Home page gives users an up-to-date view of important company information, such as daily reminders, cash flow, bank account summaries, overdue customer accounts and vendor lists. Companies can use the Cash Flow Forecasting tool to manage upcoming revenue and expenses.

Up to five users can use the program at the same time, with support for high volumes of transactions and no limits on the number of records. Work flows efficiently because multiple employees can access business information that helps them complete their jobs.

Summary

Microsoft Small Business Accounting 2006 is a well-thought-out application. Navigating the system is extremely flexible, and the designers appear to have included all of the tasks a small business could want. It also is scalable to accommodate growth of the thriving small company. When the financial needs of the business change, Small Business Accounting can be seamlessly upgraded to a more sophisticated program from Microsoft Business Solutions.

Microsoft

www.microsoft.com/sba
800-642-7676

The Year End Wizard Facilitates Closing One Fiscal Year to Open Another



By Bernard Rossell

Peachtree by Sage 2007 comes in four versions sold at retail: First, Pro, Complete and Premium. Peachtree is the granddaddy of all accounting software products. It was among the earliest packages offered and only one of a handful of early arrivals that is still in the market.

Features

A table on the back of the box lists the features offered by each version, organized into four categories: Standard Accounting, Business Management Tools, Advanced Accounting and Premium Features. The features of the Pro version stop midway through the Business Management Tools, and some of the features it does have are limited. For example, for the features Customizable Reports and Financial Statements, Pro has 100+, Complete has 125+ and Premium has 140+. The Complete version lists features all the way down through the Advanced Accounting Features group.

Premium, which was the version Sage sent for this review, includes the whole list. Peachtree First is a beginning product, and Peachtree Quantum is at the top of the line and offers expanded multi-user capabilities with support for up to ten users. The software is shipped on two discs. Installation went smoothly and took only about 20 minutes.

Two useful things I found in Peachtree were the Year End Wizard and the Purge Wizard. The Year End Wizard facilitates closing one fiscal year and the opening of another. Peachtree allows a maximum of two years to be open at the same time, so near the end of the second year, you must close the first year to open up a third. The Wizard detects any items that may still need to be resolved before the year can be closed. After the close is complete, you are no longer permitted to make any changes to the records in the closed year, although the year remains as a read-only file that can be used to provide information for reports, etc.

The Purge Wizard gives you an organized way to remove records no longer needed, thus helping to keep your files to a manageable size. You can use the Purge Wizard to remove



records of a customer who is no longer active or of an employee who has left the firm, for example. In using the Purge Wizard, you give it parameters, such as dates or transaction types and it does the rest.

When you first add a new business, you are asked to select the Business Type from a drop-down list. There are six choices: Exempt Organization (a not-for-profit), Corporation, S Corporation, Partnership, Sole Proprietorship and Limited Liability Company (LLC). These, of course, are the types of businesses recognized by the IRS. Based on the type you select, Peachtree sets up the appropriate equity accounts. For example, Peachtree includes accounts for Common Stock, Paid-in Capital, Retained Earnings and Dividends Paid for a corporation. For an LLC, the equity accounts would be Retained Earnings, Member Contribution and Member Draw.

The Purge Wizard gives you an organized way to remove records no longer needed, thus keeping your files manageable.

Summary

Sage has put a lot of thought into customizing its package for a variety of industries. They offer industry-specific versions for Construction firms, Non-Profit and Distribution, which is not to say that you must buy these industry-specific versions to be able to use the product in one of those business categories. It's just that the special versions, with their industry-specific features and reports make life a little easier. Also offered are options for processing the company payroll. All their packages accommodate in-house payroll as well.

Sage Software

www.peachtree.com
770-724-4000