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Intuit: QuickBooks

Money, money, money – that's what it all comes down to, and if you want it to keep on coming, cooking the books isn't enough, you have to do them properly. QuickBooks from Intuit takes away the pain.

Business means money, and money needs keeping track of, both for your sake and to keep the taxman happy. There's no getting away from the necessity of financial management if you don't want your business to fold before it's even started, but for a small business the cost of hiring an accountant can be restrictive. QuickBooks from Intuit is designed to enable small businesses to take control themselves without having any knowledge of accounting.

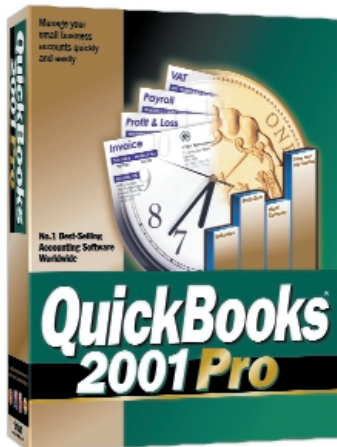
Intuit has just released QuickBooks 2001, and QuickBooks Pro 2001, version nine of the software. As with any software update there are a number of new features designed to knock your socks off. With QuickBooks the emphasis is clearly on gaining maximum results for minimum effort, and every feature is designed to simplify the procedures involved in book-keeping.

mind reader

The software takes an intuitive forms-based approach, so the user just enters all the relevant data into familiar-looking forms, such as cheques, bills, invoices and purchase orders. The software then takes the information and does the accounting for you. The process is speeded up by the use of features like QuickFill and QuickAdd. The former automatically fills in information when it's been previously used – so if the user types in the first few letters of a regular customer's name, QuickFill adds the rest. QuickAdd allows the user to add names and items on the fly, so enabling cheques to be filled in for example without the need to add in detailed information about the payee.

Another handy feature is QuickZoom. This, as you would expect, enables the user to zoom in on specific details, such as a section of a graph or pie chart. A user might, for example, wish to check out the advertising expenses for the last six months. They could then click on the relevant section of a pie chart to get a month by month graph, and then click on a month to get a report of each transaction for that particular month.

QuickBooks comes with over 90 preset business reports, including basic accounting reports as well as things like cash flow forecasts, all of which are customisable. That's one



of the major plus points about the software, almost everything is customisable to make it work for different kinds of business and their requirements. Graphs are also easily achieved to enable users to collate data and spot financial trends etc., with the modicum of effort, and these include income and expense, sales, and accounts payable.

To stop the familiar and tedious rooting around for information that usually comes with sorting out invoices and orders, QuickBooks has various Centres where vital data is kept, such as the Company Centre for all critical business information, and a Customer Centre for customer data. The information is kept on one page for each centre, so in the Customer Centre, data

Fact file: QuickBooks and QuickBooks Pro

What is it?

Accounting software for the uninitiated

Who is it from?

Intuit – www.intuit.com

What are its key features?

Takes an intuitive forms-based approach, so you just fill in the familiar looking forms and the software does all the hard work for you, speeding up the process with features such as QuickFill and QuickAdd. Other features include:

- QuickZoom - for close ups on specific details
- 90 plus preset business reports
- Customer and company centres for crucial data
- Excel and Word integrated with QuickBooks Pro
- The Pro edition is multi-user and multi-currency

What does it cost?

£99 for QuickBooks and £249 for QuickBooks Pro

Can I buy it now?

Yes you can

Specifications:

Users must have Windows 95, 98, ME, NT 4.0 or 2000, a minimum memory of 32MB (64MB is recommended) and at least a 166MHz IBM compatible Pentium computer. QuickBooks Pro users also need Microsoft Word and Excel 97 or higher, Outlook 97 or higher and at least ACT! 3.08. QuickBooks Pro contains one user license, for more, you need to buy additional copies of the software for each user which is a bit of a bind, and everyone needs the same version.

such as names, phone numbers, latest sales and outstanding balances is shown on the first page, and clicking on a customer's name brings up further details.

The main difference between QuickBooks and QuickBooks Pro is that the latter includes Microsoft Word and Excel integration with

multi-user functionality meaning that all employees can have access on their own computers. Having Word means there is a shortcut to creating letters using customer data from that stored on QuickBooks Pro, without the need to re-enter information such as names and addresses. There are also pre-written and pre-formatted letter included as part of the software.

write it up

The advantage of Excel's inclusion is the ability it gives users to automatically send it report data from QuickBooks Pro, where it can be reformatted or manipulated to meet the needs of the business at that specific time.

Being multi-user, obviously more than one person can have access to the same data as well as the whole QuickBooks Pro programme at any one time, but to avoid confusion, only one user can edit the information at a time. The software also enables users to create job estimates in the same way purchase orders or invoices can be filled out in QuickBooks, and once an estimate has been drawn up, it's instantly possible to convert them to invoices, so when the time comes to bill the customer, clicking the mouse generates an invoice with all the relevant data already filled in.

QuickBooks Pro is also multi-currency enabled, Act! and Outlook integrated, and can deal with time and job costing, progress invoicing and sorting out pricing levels. Both versions of the software are basically time saving devices, and if doing the accounts is a particular bugbear of yours, the software provides a very good way of sorting it out and getting it done as quickly and simply as possible. The forms in both versions are uncomplicated and take very little time to get your head round, even without any previous book-keeping experience. You may think accounts are dull, but QuickBooks should manage to raise a little enthusiasm for the task. □