

But Which Accounting Software Do I Need?

There's an abundance of Accounting Software packages in the marketplace, but even so, deciding which one would be best suited to your individual needs, doesn't necessarily have to be a difficult decision. You just have to break the process down to a few matching a few simple criteria.

Firstly, you need to ascertain what you want the product to do. Secondly, forget the sales hype that merely showcases all the "must have features" in each product, and thirdly, analyze each according to its functionality and suitability for your requirements.

Features:

There really isn't that much difference between the free software packages and the 'pricey' alternatives other than reporting capabilities, inventory management and the number of users allowed. Most of the other basic functions are quite similar from one product to another, and in some cases the free products out perform some of the more expensive options. One thing to always keep in mind though, are your future needs, but don't pay for features that you're never likely to need.

Ease of Use:

Always try the software before you buy it if you can. The product might have a steep learning curve that takes a lot of training before it becomes easy to use. A program that is relatively cheap might not be the best solution if it takes you 3 months to "get the hang of it!" You also need to consider how easy it is to integrate with any other specialty software you currently use?

Free v Purchased / Major Brands:

Are you prepared to risk using a free software product that may or may not be upgraded and supported, as opposed to a name brand product where these things are virtually assured? When you finally select the product that looks best suited to your business you may as well get the best value. Shopping around might just prove that the local computer shop can supply what you want for less than the big online merchants.

Scalability:

Whilst we think we know where our businesses will be in 2 years or 5 years times, things don't always go as planned, so be sure to buy a product that has the ability to cope with your future business directions. It may well be better to opt for a product initially that has more flexibility to be adapted or added to at a later date.

Product Support:

Which support program would suit your needs best? Will you survive with just email support, or do you need to have access to phone support. Maybe you'd sooner be able to call the supplier and have them come to your office for onsite support when necessary. The level of support you are likely to need will largely depending on the level of skills you have "in house". Down time is costly, so assess your likely support needs closely.

Make a list of everything you need in each of the above areas, and be sure you get all the features you need, or are likely to need, but don't waste money on unnecessary "bells and whistles" that you are highly unlikely to ever need.

If you do decide to minimize your costs initially, make sure there is a smooth process to expand the program later if necessary.

Making your decision with these basic factors in mind will go a long way towards getting you the accounting software program that will meet your needs.

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About the Author

David Neehly writes extensively about Accounting Software on his website at <http://www.accountingsoftwarefree.com>, where you'll find many more interesting articles. Don't forget to grab his FREE newsletter, it's full of expert advice, freebies, and the latest updates about Accounting Software.