

How to select software to manage your small business

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Whether you are running a small business out of your home or have a shop of your own, one of the keys to success is figuring out how to manage your finances. When John Garrett of Boise, Idaho, bought Triad Distributing Northwest Inc. in the summer of 2001, he had a lot of work to do. "The people I bought the business from had a totally manual system. They had order and sales information hand-written on a spreadsheet, and used a typewriter to make out checks. It was a real mess," says Garrett. Following the advice of his accountant, one of the first things he did after taking over the company (which sells sealants, caulks, adhesives and hardware to customers in the construction industry) was start looking for a computer program that would integrate everything together. He sat down and came up with a list of the things he needed the program to handle:

- * Inventory tracking
- * Accounts payable (check writing, bill payment, purchases, purchase orders)
- * Accounts receivable (quotes, invoicing, sales orders)
- * Payroll
- * Offer daily snapshots of his finances (expenses, income, gross margin, etc.)

The program Garrett ultimately ended up choosing was Peachtree Complete Accounting. "It was a perfect fit," he says. In addition to offering all the tools he needed, the software also features remote access, the ability to handle credit card authorization and processing, integration with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Word documents, and synchronization with Microsoft Outlook. It also provides an audit trail which makes life a lot easier for the business owner come tax time. Garrett says the program saves him a lot of time and money because he doesn't have to spend time finding documents for his accountant. "I just give him a password; he dials into the system, transfers a backup of my records to his machine, and gets my return done in a few hours. All the information he needs is at his fingertips, says Garrett. To learn more about the software, log on to www.peachtree.com, where you can download a free trial version that will help you determine if it's the right software package for you. Peachtree Complete Accounting is available for sale directly from the manufacturer at that same Web site.

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