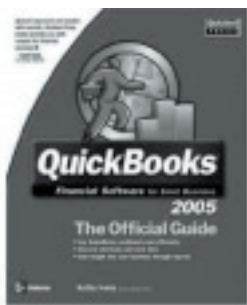


by Paul Cook



QuickBooks® is a popular accounting package.

QuickBooks Pro 2005 for the Mac has a list price of about \$300 and an upgrade price of about \$200. Intuit

is the publisher of the QuickBooks program. Intuit has their company headquarters in Mountain View, CA. They are publicly traded on NASDAQ using the symbol INTU.

QuickBooks 2005, The Official Guide, by McGraw-Hill/Quicken Press book is a cross between a reference and a tutorial to that program. I say it is a cross because like a reference, it is organized by subject, but like a tutorial it has some step-by-step instructions to make you familiar with that subject. But as a whole, it is probably more useful as a reference than as a training tutorial. I don't readily see someone sitting down and learning QuickBooks by using this book. It is certainly possible to do so, but it is not optimal for this purpose.

If training is what you are after, you may want to check out the QuickBooks web site. They do have a number of training courses available.

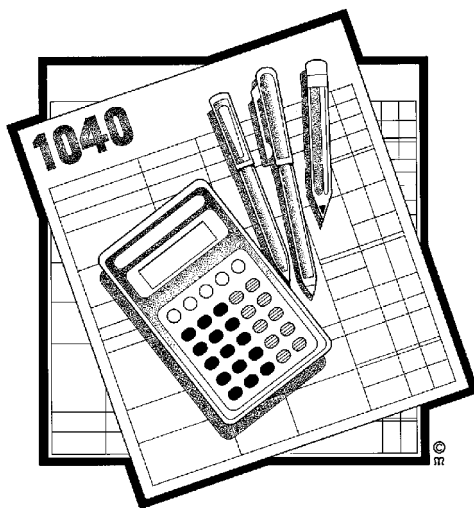
I was very interested in QuickBooks, because I was looking to replace my current billing program. QuickBooks claimed to do billing and since we already used Quicken, I had hopes that QuickBooks might be just the thing I needed.

Fortunately, I was able to download a demo/evaluation version of QuickBooks 2005 for the Mac. I say fortunately, because in the end I decided that QuickBooks Pro was not an answer to my problem. The book was a big help in my determining that.

For me billing is a pain. I'm a person with two engineering degrees and a background in R&D now working as a computer consultant because I had a few too many Dilbert moments at the last mega-bureaucracy that I worked for. It pays the bills. But

for me, billing is monotonous detail oriented work. Very necessary to getting paid, but not my favorite part of the job.

The nature of my consulting is such that I normally consult for a single client for many hours, often an entire day. My bills will typically indicate a total number of hours for a given day and will provide a verbose description of tasks that I accomplished that day. I don't do it this way because I like to, but it helps my clients understand what they are being charged for.



And that makes them feel better about retaining my services.

Even with the books help, I couldn't figure out how to easily make the kind of bills that my clients expect. My conclusion is that this is not a shortcoming of the book, but rather of QuickBooks itself.

I was also hoping for some way to automate the billing of certain overhead expenses. I charge for commute expenses, so in a worst case that means the commute to the train station, parking at the train station, the train fare, etc. Currently each of these is a separate billing entry. Yet a given client location, almost always has the same expenses associated with it. It would sure be nice to be able to automate this.

Again, it didn't look like QuickBooks was any help there. It would be real nice if there were someone to keep the records

while I'm doing the work with my laptop, then merge it back into some kind of a server database when I get done. Not a QuickBooks feature.

As part of considering QuickBooks, I looked at a number of comments others had made. This was also not encouraging. There were a number of users bemoaning a lack of feature parity with the Windows version and even some claiming that QuickBooks lacked some features found even in Mac Quicken.

Then there was this issue of Mac Intuit products not being able to download financial data from banks and other financial institutions. Apparently, the banks must purchase arbitrarily different software in order to support Macs downloading. One version will NOT support both Macs and PCs. The banks don't often pay extra for this.

Intuit has nice words of commitment to the Mac platform on their web site, but do such actions tell a different story?

Another disappointment was that QuickBooks does not seem to support multi-user networking access. If both business and home accounting were moved to QuickBooks, then any family (or other small business) with more than one computer has a problem using it. (MYOB is one product that does support networking.)

So on the whole, QuickBooks® 2005 The Official Guide, seems to be a useful and well-written book. It saved me from having purchased QuickBooks. But if you actually use QuickBooks, you may find it helpful too.

Review of QuickBooks 2005, The Official Guide by Kathy Ivens:

QuickBooks® 2005 The Official Guide, © 2005. ISBN: 0-07-225855-1. List price is about \$30 (\$29.99), but it can be had from discounters for about \$20.