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## Most Americans Plan to Use Their Tax Refunds for Savings, Investments, or to Pay Off Debt

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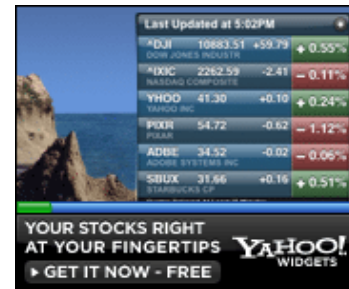
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Monday April 3, 7:00 am ET

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CONTACT: Edward Segal of Taxsoftware.com, +1-301-320-7080, [help@taxsoftware.com](mailto:help@taxsoftware.com)

Web site: <http://www.taxsoftware.com/>

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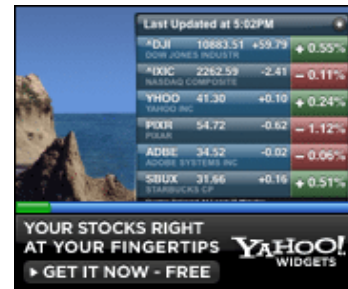
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Press Release

Source: Taxsoftware.com

## Most Americans Plan to Use Their Tax Refunds for Savings, Investments, or to Pay Off Debt

Monday April 3, 7:00 am ET

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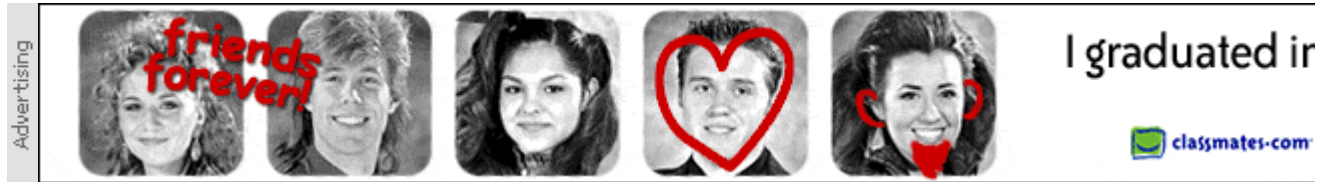
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CONTACT: Edward Segal of Taxsoftware.com, +1-301-320-7080, [help@taxsoftware.com](mailto:help@taxsoftware.com)

Web site: <http://www.taxsoftware.com/>

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## Microsoft Small Business Applications

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Tuesday, April 11, 2006 9:17 PM

### Lowdown on Business Contact Manager

There is a great write up on Business Contact Manager for Outlook 2003 at :

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HA011505241033.aspx>

The article is an adaptation from [Jim Boyce's](#) book on Office Outlook. Jim has written nearly 50 books on software and operating systems. Nearly a dozen on Office and Outlook.

New users to BCM will find the screen shots and descriptions of the key feature areas very useful.

The 2007 version of Outlook with Business Contact Manager is in development right now with some very exciting features that will add another level of benefits to small businesses who want to manage their projects, sales and marketing processes centrally. I am extremely proud of the new and enhanced features in this the third major release of the BCM feature area in Outlook. The prerelease product guide is now live at :

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/preview/programs/outlookbcm/guide.mspix>

Beta 2 for Office 2007 is coming. There is still time to [sign up](#).

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)

[Sunday, March 19, 2006 7:14 PM](#)

### An inflection point decision

In any major product development effort there are 3 to 6 key decisions that I term as inflection points. The path one chooses at these junctures ultimately influences the â€œsoul of the productâ€. The entire small business application suite of products has been developed from scratch so there were no boundaries or constraints predetermining any inflection point decision. The only guiding principle was to innovate using software so the small business eco system would benefit from the final solution. As I look back at the last five years, I can pin-point these inflection points for each component of the suite (BCM, SBA, POS, Payroll and our suite of online services). Today I will share some of the background behind one of these crucial decisions that we had to make at the very beginning of the project. This decision was around the selection of the best technical architecture and framework to build Office Small Business Accounting i.e what tools and technologies should this new product be based on.

Selecting a technology foundation is not a simple matter of picking a programming language and kicking off development. While ease of programming and ability to create the best features for the customers is of primary importance, equally critical is the ability and flexibility the architecture will provide for scalability (growing with the needs of the user), maintainability, reliability, security, deployment and maintenance. Furthermore a key need in the accounting space is to enable ISVs to build extensions to the application so they can add industry specific functionality (from construction to farming). We began the selection process by first hiring some of the most talented engineers in the industry most of whom had built multiple software applications in the past, then we undertook one of the most extensive customer research studies to deeply understanding the needs of the customers, the CPAs & the ISV community and finally and probably the most crucial step was to identify all the choice available to build the application.

In late 2002 we created multiple teams to evaluate each technology choice by building a sample prototype on each option. Every member of each prototype team was someone who believed deeply in that choice. So the effort was more like a technical bakeoff or the computer science equivalent of the popular TV series survivor. We put together a set of selection criterion and started voting off the options that failed to meet the sum total of all our priorities. Each prototype effort actually helped us flesh out the information architecture that finally was the basis of SBA as these were not academic exercises but rather small representative steps of what we were trying to accomplish with SBA. After nearly six months of very deep technical due diligence the choice was very clear. The best and most efficient platform for developing a complex application that would span a desktop exe and several web services was our very own .NET framework.

The .NET framework is a development and execution environment that allows different programming languages and libraries to work together seamlessly to create Windows based applications. The .NET framework consists of the common language runtime and framework class libraries, a consistent object oriented library of prepackaged functionality. SBA has been architected to run on top of the .NET framework and consists of a clean three layer application comprising

- A presentation or the User Interface (UI) layer built using winforms
- A business logic layer primarily built using C#
- A storage layer using a rich relational data base (MS SQL 2000 desktop edition); Data access is via ADO.NET



Using .NET was a phenomenal decision as it enabled us to rapidly develop and deploy a very complex application like SBA and yet abstract all the deep accounting logic with the simplest and cleanest interfaces in the industry. In addition, we could expose the application to both CPAs and ISVs for the deeper processes and integration each of these communities needed.

There is a [great article](#) on MSDN that articulates the benefits of .NET for ISVs. In many ways, SBA was an ISV building on .NET and on behalf of the entire R&D team, I can attest to the benefits we received during the development effort (and continue to receive as we work on the next version) :

- 1) Speed of development as a result of quick ramp up of new developers on modern well factored tool set based on object oriented programming
- 2) Language independent
- 3) A solid and robust security layer,
- 4) Focus on SBA business logic (.NET takes care of system interfaces for managing buffer overrun, memory mgt etc)

Another article on MSDN has a very nice background on [what is .NET framework](#) that is a very good starting point for new developers on the framework. Our small business effort is a testament to the true value that a company can gain by betting on the right underpinnings and foundational technology and architecture. Starting from scratch and releasing the most innovative products in eons old categories in just 2-3 years was primarily possible because of this important decision.

As a result of the clean architecture and .NET underpinnings, SBA is exposed at every layer of its architecture and the resulting software developers kit (SDK) gives ISVs a complete set of tools and supporting material to build solutions on top of the application. An ISV can develop several types of solutions with SBA:

- 1) **Build a standalone app** that works alongside SBA and calls in to relevant business logic. BCM is actually an internal example of this type of integration
- 2) **SBA Application add-ins** â€” ability to add menu items and tool bar buttons and connect to ISV managed add-in business logic; Also hook to events for pre and post save/delete (eg : notification to a sales person via IM when an invoice changes); Customizing field labels via XML template
- 3) **Build addl solutions** in other office apps like access and excel using SBA data (eg reports, pivot tables etc)

The SBA SDK primarily consists of :

- 1) .Net framework (CLR, framework class libraries and object oriented library of prepackaged functionality)
- 2) SBA API which consists of four dynamic link libraries created in C# and can be included in the ISV dev environment
  - ⌚ ■ SBAAPI.dll â€” Guts of the business logic â€” Exposing the core business logic of SBA
  - ⌚ ■ SBAUI.dll â€” Enables ISV applications to call SBA forms and UI logic
  - ⌚ ■ SBAIAPI.dll â€” Public Interface for the SBAAPI.dll
  - ⌚ ■ SBAUIUI.dll â€” Public interface for the SBAUI.dll
- 3) Property field customization template
- 4) Property fields customization uploader
- 5) MSDE
- 6) Code Samples
- 7) SDK help files

All the benefits of .NET accrue to the users of the SBA SDK. In addition there are some important advantages over other development platforms in the domain :

- 1) Applications linking or integrating to SBA get in-process access to SBA (SBA logic can accessed within the process of the ISV app i.e the SBA executable doesnâ€™t have to be separately fired up)
- 2) Full functionality of SBA is exposed to developers (all core business logic

within SBA is exposed via its public API)

- 3) Integrated platform security at a database level
- 4) Access to data via a high performant relational database
- 5) Multiple levels of customization

In April 2005, we announced the availability of the SDK and within a few weeks the SBA SDK became one of the most downloaded of all MSDN technologies. In upcoming posts I will profile and write about the great applications that our ISVs have built on top of SBA using its powerful SDK. A current list of all shipping ISV applications available for SBA is available at [office.microsoft.com](http://office.microsoft.com).

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [2 Comments](#)

Thursday, March 16, 2006 6:06 AM

### [Great NYT article on technology benefiting small businesses](#)

I came across a great article in the New York Times that features a number of small and medium size businesses that are benefiting from the use of technology from companies like Microsoft, IBM, Salesforce.com etc. I personally find these stories inspirational. The work we are doing with the Microsoft office suite of small business applications is exactly in line with the principles articulated in the article, which is to make software innovation available and affordable for small businesses everywhere.

Here is a link to the article titled *Web Services Upend Old Ideas About the Little Guy's Role*. The journalist is Steve Lohr .

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/21/business/businessspecial2/21growth.html?ex=1142658000&en=f1fd0e48e959968a&ei=5070>

FYI, it requires a registered account (free) on NYT web site.

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)

Tuesday, March 14, 2006 4:32 AM

### [SBA in a non profit environment](#)

â€œQuite simply, Small Business Accounting has redefined how we run the office. We are no longer flying by the seat of our pants. Safe to say, we couldnâ€™t have taken on more business without it.â€ *Noel Hanson, Owner, Hanson and Company*

[A great video that shows SBA and BCM in action at Hanson & Co, a Pasadena, CA based non profit organization that recently migrated from Quicken to SBA.](#)

PI note the video link performs best only on high bandwidth (broadband) connections.

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)

Wednesday, March 08, 2006 3:33 PM

### [SBA Top 10 List !](#)

I want to devote this posting to highlighting the top 10 reasons why a small business user should adopt SBA. As I have been writing earlier, the uniqueness of the product is driven by both its user friendliness & its deep feature set and even more importantly the manner in which people and processes of an organization get connected across its front and back office. In addition, the service offerings integrated into SBA and provided over the internet, help protect the user from the overhead of managing complexity in infrastructure (IT servers, credit card terminals, tax rules etc) eg ADP payroll and Chase Manhattanâ€™s credit card processing.

So here is the top 10 list of superior features of Office Small Business Accounting that makes it so unique in the marketplace :

- 1) User Friendliness of the product
  - a. A clean and anchor navigation bar with all related tasks and lists a business person needs
  - b. All documents (including transactions) are available as lists eg invoices, payments records etc
  - c. All lists are sortable by any column, size can be changed, columns can be moved just as though one was in excel
  - d. Simple navigation of work flow in both visual and table form
  - e. Live spotlight for latest information on
    - i. Software updates
    - ii. Solutions from MS and partners
    - iii. Tips, help topics and knowledge base
  - f. Context sensitive reports are never more then two clicks away
  - g. User can open multiple windows and manage them in the task pane like any other office app { technically this is called SDI windows (single document interface)}. This also enables multi monitor usage if needed
  - h. Each change in company preference can be saved individually when the window is closed
  - i. A user can save a document and leave it in focus and continue working on it just like any other office app
  - j. Simplified setup and first time use via a very easy wizard
  - k. Migration of data from Quickbooks (master AND transaction records)
  - l. Customer and vendor history can be viewed in the master records
  - m. Customizable dash board of business metrics, cash flow and open tasks provides for birds eye view of the business
  - n. Expenses and other non item accounts can be directly added to an invoice
- 2) Superior implementation of accounting rules (full accrual double entry book-keeping while also providing the option for cash basis reporting)
  - a. Opening balances goes into one account
  - b. History of changes in sales tax is preserved
  - c. Opening balances for customers and vendors do not cause P&L posting
  - d. Posted documents are voided during editing and reposted with new amts for compliance with GAAP
  - e. Audit trail of voided documents can be seen in transaction detail by account (TDA) report
  - f. Audit trail of edited documents can be seen in TDA report
  - g. Taxable items are treated consistently whether the amount is negative or positive (unlike some of the other software in the market)
  - h. Reimbursable expenses are easier to add to invoices
  - i. Sales tax (flat amt) can be added to documents
  - j. Non job customers can be created even if job preferences is on
  - k. Formal (hard) fiscal year closing is possible in the product to confirm to accounting rules
  - l. User can see closing entries in journal entry list
  - m. FIFO method of inventory to more accurately cost and control purchases
  - n. User can have individual payment terms by tax vendor
  - o. All journal entries listed in UI
  - p. Statement of cash flows follow GAAP
    - i. Short term liability transaction

- ii. Accumulated depreciation
  - q. Pay bill feature computes total payment
  - r. Innovation in cash basis reporting to include ability of user or CPA to denote each account type as inclusive in the report eg current liability
  - s. Ability to do journal reclass in simple, GAAP compliant manner eg breaking a T&E expense into a T and an E
  - t. Ability to link credit memo to appropriate invoice (create from option)
- 3) Rich reporting engine with built in analysis tools (eg P&L comparison to prior period by \$, % by period); built in graphs in key reports
- 4) Cash flow tool to manage inflows and outflows of money inclusive of estimates, sales orders, purchase orders, sales tax payable (based on user preference) with ability to analyze additional what-if scenarios. Cash flow model can also be exported to excel
- 5) Customization of all customer facing documents in word
- 6) Integration with excel for export of data with format and worksheets for additional scrubbing, analysis and saving snapshot for future reference
- 7) Integration with email allows all customer facing documents like invoices, credit memos etc to be e-mailed from SBA and additionally tracked in outlook w/BCM for historic view of interactions
- 8) Customer financial history (all transactions) visible to sales and marketing users within Outlook w/BCM based on granted permissions
- 9) A sales person in the organization can create an opportunity in Outlook w/BCM by calling out master inventory (product list) from SBA
- 10) A sales opportunity created in Outlook w/BCM can be directly converted into a quote or a sales order or an invoice in SBA (per the norm of the business)

Well, I thought I could stop at the top 10 ☺ but there are just too many more features that make SBA the superior product in the market, so I will take the liberty of adding another 10 :

- 11) Calendar or tasks can be marked as billable within Outlook with BCM and automatically flow in to SBA for invoicing and payroll processing
- 12) Self service payroll service from ADP integrated with SBA data and records
  - a. Capability to use ADP for direct deposits, tax filings and tax payments
  - b. Includes all state and local filing capability (efile and signature ready forms)
- 13) Security is at a database level so user can be more assured of safety of their financial data
- 14) Storage of all information is in a relational database (Microsoft SQL Desktop Edition) so there is no limitations to number of master records or transactions a business can have (eg customer, item, employee, vendors etc).
- 15) Independent software vendors (ISVs) building industry specific software can easily call into the business logic directly w/o requiring SBA to be in process (unlike some other products in the market)
- 16) ISVs can create applications in language of their preference and work with SBA
  - a. Side by side "calling in and posting transactions
  - b. Add on to menu and tool bar
  - c. Tie managed add in to events
  - d. Customize labels
- 17) ISVs can also use Microsoft Access for additional enhancements
- 18) ISVS or CPAs can use Microsoft Excel to create custom pivot tables for analysis for end user
  - a. Rich analysis pack with samples pivots and reports ships with the product
- 19) Eight concurrent users supported with role based permission and security

- 20) Upgrade path to Microsoft Dynamics solutions cater to lifecycle support for a small business and give them assurance that the solution scales with them as their business grows

I have to admit this is a lot of fun as there are so many great features built into the product by a very talented group of people. However I will take a break here :- ) and will revisit the feature list as we come closer to the shipment of our next version. In the meantime for anyone interested, here is a link to a direct product comparison between SBA and some of the other solutions in the market like QuickBooks and Peachtree.

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/accounting/prodinfo/quickcompare.mspix>

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
Tuesday, March 07, 2006 12:32 PM

### **Texoma Home & Garden**

Chris Schatte, owner of Texoma Home & Garden describes his experience with SBA and BCM as "Perfect!". Texoma is a 12,000 square foot family owned garden center in Vernon, Texas that also provides landscaping services. They employ 8 to 10 people in the busy season and have one computer server, four desktop PCs and three laptops. In the past, Texoma was using QuickBooks and had several manual workarounds to manage their day to day operations. Not too dissimilar to the example I had written about in my earlier post describing my experience at the small food wholesaler in Southern California. In the case of Texoma, owner Chris Schatte used to waste a lot of time with manual invoice creation, tracking product lifecycle (for their plant stock) and tracking billable hours for the services they performed. Chris also wanted to make better use of his landscaping contract data which was stored in Outlook 2003 and was frustrated that he was unable to do so with the lack of integration from QuickBooks. He basically wanted to get more visibility into the business and be more efficient with the day to day business tasks. Chris migrated the operations of Texoma from QuickBooks to Small Business Accounting 2006 along with Outlook with Business Contact Manager after testing SBA in parallel to QuickBooks for several weeks. The rest, in his own words :

[Video of Texoma using Microsoft Small Business Accounting 2006 and Outlook with Business Contact Manager 2003.](#)

PI note the video link performs best only on high bandwidth (broadband) connections.

This is exactly what we designed the product for. We hope that Texoma and the millions of other small businesses out there in the country will never be frustrated again. Microsoft is here and we are devoted to serving them with software innovation.

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
Monday, March 06, 2006 11:49 AM

### **Network Computing Review**

I wanted to highlight a recent review of office small business accounting 2006 software and the business contact manager update for Outlook 2003.

<http://www.networkcomputing.com/showitem.jhtml?articleID=177101000&pgno=1>

The review by Scott Koegler was published by Network Computing on 1/17/06. It is a very

thoughtful analysis of the product and highlights both some of the strengths while calling out a few areas for improvement.

I just wanted to add that we have received the feedback from other users about adding the ability to change master records in SBA when modifications are made in BCM. This is something we are definitely working on and hope that we can provide more capabilities around this scenario in our next release. We also hear the feedback on adding a boost to the reporting drill down performance and are leaving no stone unturned (architecturally speaking) to address that.

The article refers to the price of SBA as \$179. That is indeed the MSRP but there is a special limited time promotion that is active right now which features rebates for new users and for those upgrading from older bookkeeping software. Here is a link to the latest price on [Amazon.Com](http://Amazon.Com). It is currently being offered at \$69.99 and has an additional \$30 rebate over and above this. Most retailers are also offering the same price both at their stores and web sites. This is quite a price (!) and I know many small businesses have taken advantage of this great offer and are enjoying the software even more as a result :-).

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
[Monday, March 06, 2006 10:33 AM](#)

### [A picture is worth a thousand words](#)

In my earlier postings I explained the vision of the small business suite and our focus on breaking software boundaries. The diagram below shows this visually.



The key design concepts of the Microsoft small business application suite revolve around 3 main pillars:

- 1) Providing access to the right information - to the right person - at the right time within a small business organization. This translates to deep and native integration of data across front office (CRM, productivity & communication) and back office processes (accounting, payroll, credit processing)
- 2) Helping small businesses reduce administrative overhead for complex tasks like

- payroll & credit card processing by managing changes to tax tables, filings, credit authorizations etc via services from partners like ADP and Chase Manhattan Bank
- 3) Proving access to new functionality via the web eg email marketing linkage to business contact manager

This unique implementation now allows small businesses to reduce a ton of non value added time and effort in finding and re-entering data that is already in a application somewhere within their organization. A few examples that this suite now opens up:

1. Enabling a **sales person** to create an invoice or sales order from an opportunity within outlook with BCM
2. Enabling a **sales person** to view customer sales history, accounts receivables, payment patterns etc all within outlook with BCM
3. Enabling a **service professional** to bill a calendar or task performed for a customer from within outlook with BCM
4. Enabling a **business owner - office manager** to view all sales activities, receivables, cash flow and communication activity across the company in a single dashboard within SBA
5. Enabling a **marketing person** to create a email marketing campaign and track conversions using the Microsoft ListBuilder service with contacts in outlook with BCM
6. Enabling a small business to have access to all payroll tax table changes (via ADPs web service) without having to manage and maintain these manually
7. Enable a small business to process credit card transactions directly from within SBA at a competitive transaction fee and without the need for a dedicated phone line and separate credit card terminal

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
[Wednesday, March 01, 2006 5:26 PM](#)

### **The reviews are in !**

After years of intense hard work and dedication, the moment of truth for a software group arrives when the product(s) are finally available to its end users and hit the retail shelves, the OEM manufacturing lines and the reseller community. It really and truly "takes a village" to build and release software. From the first moment of epiphany to the general availability of the product, the journey is intense and fraught with challenges. And it is only worthwhile if the benefits of the labor do in fact translate into real life. Each company and team ensures this in different ways, after all no one wants to build software that wont be used ☺. At Microsoft, in order to be really sure we were envisioning and building the right product for our beloved small businesses, we worked closely with representatives of real businesses from day 1. The R&D effort was guided by a strong contingent of end users, CPAs and ISVs. Hundreds of meetings, emails and discussions took place with the representatives of our user base during the development of the product. At every step, we tested the features being built, the ease of use of the software, the simplicity in setting up the program, ease of modifying preferences, accuracy in migrating data and down to specifics like terminology, colors, placement of fields etc etc. As the first full build of the product set became available in the spring of 2004, we decided to invite in an additional 30 accounting professional partners, doubling the size of our advisory councils. Just a few days before Memorial Day 2004, we gave each of our advisory council members our first cut of the software and asked them to take it with them and test it in the real world environment by using it in parallel with their current software. For the next several months as we worked on the fit and finish of the software, our partners were test driving SBA, BCM, our payroll solution, our credit processing module and the supplies ordering system. I looked forward to the weekly debriefs on comments we were receiving and kept a running count of the number of transactions we had run thru our "engine" ☺. It was only in early fall and after our advisory council and internal test team had run over 250,000 real world transactions thru our software did we as a team begin to feel comfortable with our design and implementation. The over 1 million lines of code that had begun with that white board and a small conference room was finally getting to a point where we could begin the final glide path to shipping. On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005 we finally cut the gold discs and sent them over to building 123 where the kits are prepared for manufacturing and our OEM partners.

Even though BCM had been released as a standalone version back in 2003, we had now finally put our initial vision in place with a full product suite encompassing front office, back office and services solution. Over the next few weeks the product reviews began to pour in from analysts, industry experts, our broader ISV channel, CPAs and most importantly our end customers. Waiting for these reviews and comments after all the hard work is quite an experience and one that I may talk about at a later stage in more length. Suffice to say, all of us on the team can relate to perhaps an author of a book or the crew of a film and how they might feel when their work is ready to be reviewed by the world at large ☺. Wherever art and science come together, it is the interpretation of the work that makes the difference. In the words of Albert Szent Gyorgi, a noble prize winning laureate, *“discovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else! but thinking something different !”*

Here is a broad sampling of comments on the product:

## The Reviews :

### Microsoft's New Accounting App Takes on QuickBooks

*PCWorld.com* (September 7, 2005): "Office SBA is Microsoft's best effort to date to meet the accounting needs of small businesses, using easy-to-understand flowcharts that guide non-accountants in its use."

### Microsoft Plays Numbers Game

*Small Business Computing* (September 7, 2005): "It's rare for a debut program to offer a competitive alternative to programs that have evolved for years. But Microsoft Small Business Accounting 2006 is a viable package that can support the needs of small businesses."

### Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting 2006

*PC Magazine* (September 8, 2005): "The company has produced a small-business accounting package that holds its own against the long-established rival products available. Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting 2006 will serve many small businesses well, especially in view of its tight integration with Microsoft Office."

### Microsoft's Office SBA Takes Myriad Applications Into Account

*CRN* (September 16, 2005): "SBA is a complete accounting application designed to work closely with Office tools for inter-application workflow scenarios... It has a clean interface, a clear process flowchart, many wizards and myriad highly customizable features."

### Microsoft Wants You: The Software Giant takes on Intuit's Again

*BusinessWeek Online* (subscription required) (September 19, 2005): "But you can also open up the books selectively, of course to the rest of the staff if you're running the contact manager version of Outlook 2003 with SBA. That's something you can't do with QuickBooks."

## The Small Business Users weigh in:

“With our integrated financial and customer information, we can now make more efficient marketing decisions. For example, we used Small Business Accounting recently to identify our very best customers. We created gift certificates for those customers, and within a week of sending them out we garnered U.S.\$25,000 in new business.”

- Konrad & Phyllis Haskins, Co-Founders  
Teddy Bears BBQ (Retail)  
Monroe, WA

“Instead of staying at the store until 8:00 or 9:00 at night, I can leave at 6:00. Compared to the amount of time I spent on QuickBooks, I'm working much more productively.”

- Chris Schatte, Co-Owner  
Texoma Home & Garden (Retail)  
Vernon, TX

â€œI estimate that Small Business Accounting 2006 has helped us increase our administrative efficiency by 15 percent. This helps us to handle more sales in less time.â€

- Richard Jarvis, CEO  
U.S. Export Store (Import/export)  
Framingham, MA

â€œStarting up my practice didnâ€™t leave a lot of time to learn new software. Compared to Peachtree, which took a couple of weeks, with Small Business Accounting 2006, I was up and running in a couple of days.â€

- Jack Chen, Owner  
Impressions Dentistry (Healthcare)  
Renton, WA

â€œWith Microsoft Office Small Business Management Edition 2006... I can focus my time and attention on working with partners and expanding the business, and not on trying to make the software work.â€

- Rob Gorski, CEO  
JBG General Contractors (Construction)  
Canton, OH

â€œSmall Business Accounting makes our lives a lot easier, and it has really cut back on the number of hours we have to spend on accounting tasks. I used to spend 10 to 15 hours a week working with my assistant on these tasks. But now she can get it all done herself.â€

- Danah Trammel, Executive Director  
Agape CDC (Non-Profit)  
Winder, GA

â€œAutomating payroll is a huge timesaver and benefit for me. Small Business Accounting 2006 saves me several hours every two-week pay period, equating to four or five hundred dollars of my time. I can focus more on my business and less on worrying about getting the numbers right for the IRS.â€

- David Kaplan, CEO  
Online Video Editing (Publishing)  
Jupiter, FL

â€œThe Company Home Page is a giant leap forward for me. It shows everything I need at a glance, with bar charts and graphs. I couldnâ€™t get close to that much information before without wasting a lot of my staffâ€™s time.â€

- Noel Hanson, Owner  
Hanson & Company (Consulting)  
Pasadena, CA

â€œIâ€™m a traditional accountant that works with debits and credits in the traditional way. Using its double entry features, Small Business Accounting 2006 provides me with more control than I had with QuickBooks.â€

- Mae Farrow, Office Mgr  
Ironwood Self-Storage (Retail)  
Idaho Falls, ID

â€œItâ€™s the same Microsoft Office interface I am used to, and itâ€™s just one interface that I am dealing with, instead of two - Microsoft Office and QuickBooks. This easily saves 20 percent of the time I spend on administrative and management tasks.â€

- Stefano Colasanti, CEO  
IID Corp. (Import/export)  
Miami, FL

### **The ISVs comment :**

â€œWe have taken apart most major accounting software to do integration with, and this is the most exciting software that has been created in the past five years.â€

- â€’ Dan Banning  
Marketing Manager

WinEstimator Inc.

“The Small Business Accounting SDK was built from the ground up with the product. Its intuitive .NET framework allowed us to complete seamless integration with BillQuick ahead of schedule and under budget.”

“ Shafat Qazi  
CEO  
BQE Software Inc., makers of BillQuick.

“We believe that Microsoft Small Business Accounting offers an incredible solution for small-business accounting that’s powerful and easy to use. That is why we designed ESC Small Business Service and Scheduling to work exclusively with Microsoft Small Business Accounting. ESC adopts the look and feel of Microsoft Small Business Accounting, giving the user the most seamless experience possible.”

“ Thomas Fanelli  
Vice President of Sales and Marketing  
Coastal Computer Corp.

“By launching Small Business Accounting 2006, Microsoft is going to revolutionize the market for accounting solutions. The product is capturing the best from all Microsoft products and technologies. It holds all the experience from MBS, is perfectly integrated into the Office family and provides an easy .NET development platform for add-ons like our WPA Mobile solution. We strongly believe in the global potential for Small Business Accounting.”

“ Jens Davidsen  
CEO  
WPA Mobile

“With this release, Microsoft clearly demonstrates that it understands the needs of small businesses. Microsoft Small Business Accounting is exactly what small businesses need: easy to install, easy to use and the right functionality – not too little, not too much. It is obvious that Microsoft has been laser-focused on this target market.”

“ Rafael Zimberoff  
President  
Z-Firm LLC

“The combination of Microsoft Small Business Accounting and **Taxsoftware.com** is one of the first complete small-business accounting and business income tax e-file solutions for corporations using forms 1120 and 1120S, and for partnerships using Form 1065, including K-1s. Microsoft Small Business Accounting allows you to manage your accounting, export your 1099 data and income tax information, and then go to **Taxsoftware.com** to prepare and e-file your tax return and make online tax payments.”

“ Mickey Macedo  
Vice President  
**Taxsoftware.com**

### **Last but not the least by any measure, the accounting professional community weighs in :**

With nearly 100,000 products pre-ordered for trials and production (before we released the software), it was very apparent to us that the AP community was super excited to see us enter this space and turbo charge the pace of innovation. For years their requests for a stronger yet simple accounting product had fallen on deaf ears. With SBA, the playing field was being leveled and all the pent up demand for features and functionality came pouring in. Our Microsoft Professional Accounting Program has in fact become one of the most successful partners programs in the industry in a short time due to the resonance of the product and the services with our AP partners. Here are three detailed case studies describing the use of the product by Accounting professionals in the three different industries:

<https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?EvidenceID=13256&LanguageID=1&PFT=Microsoft%20Office%202003&TaxID=20153>

Andean Financial Services a small accounting, payroll and tax practice has been using both SBA and BCM

internally in their organization since Nov 2005. During this time they have quantified a 25% increase in productivity, improved customer management and reduction in support calls from their customers. In addition the automated features of the product set have given Andean greater accuracy and confidence. Andean has approximately 50 small business clients in specialty markets, restaurants and manufacturing. In the words of Jerry Mercer, the president of Andean Financials "I don't have to call tech support all the time, which probably saves a couple of hours a week. When I do have a question, the help feature is incredible". Jerry also values the navigation of the product which in his words "puts everything right there in one place. You can see reminders, cash flow, reports and the bank account summary all in a single window".

[https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?](https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?EvidenceID=13264&LanguageID=1&PFT=Small%20Business%20Go%20To%20Market&TaxID=25527)

[EvidenceID=13264&LanguageID=1&PFT=Small%20Business%20Go%20To%20Market&TaxID=25527](https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?EvidenceID=13264&LanguageID=1&PFT=Small%20Business%20Go%20To%20Market&TaxID=25527)

Cable financial is a accounting firm that provides financial planning, tax return, accounting and book keeping services to more then 300 small and medium businesses. Cable financial was using Quickbooks Pro for internal operations and most of its clients were also using some version of QuickBooks. Cable's clients were having a hard time analyzing financial data and reports and as a result were spending a fair amount of time with manual workarounds to get the info they needed to run their business. Cable decided to bet on SBA and its office integration and soon started getting a lot of benefits. "It was very easy to convert data from QuickBooks to SBA" says Dena Masuda an accountant at Cable. "You can maintain the integrity of the data inside Small Business Accounting and at the same time export the data to Access, Excel or other reporting programs to create whatever report you want" says Michelle Cable the president of the firm. According to Michelle her "primary reason for recommending Small Business Accounting to clients is to make it easier to transfer information to them on a regular basis so they can understand it better and have control over their own data".

[https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?](https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?EvidenceID=13291&LanguageID=1&PFT=Microsoft%20Office%202003&TaxID=20153)

[EvidenceID=13291&LanguageID=1&PFT=Microsoft%20Office%202003&TaxID=20153](https://members.microsoft.com/customerevidence/search/EvidenceDetails.aspx?EvidenceID=13291&LanguageID=1&PFT=Microsoft%20Office%202003&TaxID=20153)

Saxe and Associates is a accounting and technology services firm that provides a full suite of financial and computing services to its small business customer base. According to Elaine Saxe, President of the firm, "Using Business Contact Manager and Small Business Accounting makes you feel like you're using a high end package without the high costs". The true benefit of the entire suite was greatly appreciated by Elaine as she states "billable time accounts for 100% of our revenue". With BCM, we can enter billable time into our HP iPAQs on the spot so that we don't miss it". The firm in a short time has already seen a 10% increase in revenue as they transitioned from QuickBooks to SBA, benefited from more efficient client services and flexible reporting that the Microsoft solution provides and as a result been able to gain from increased market opportunities.

The journey of a thousand mile it is said, begins with the first step. We have clearly taken that first step and based on the initial reaction and feedback of our users, we seem to be headed in the right direction. The momentum and positive response to the vision and product set has been very motivating to all the teams that work so hard and diligently to develop and distribute the product set. With just a few months to go before we release the beta of our next version, we could not be more excited at this initial response.

Of course we have also received a lot of comments and feedback on areas we should add more functionality or provide greater capabilities in the product. Each input is actually treated very seriously by the team, sometimes much to the surprise of the sender 😊. Especially when we call them back to ask clarifying questions or simply agree with the logic and incorporate the feedback into the product.

I think I have patted ourselves on the back enough 😊 so will end this long post finally and get back to being humble again 😊. I need to run and catch up on an internal review of the next release 🙌

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)

[Friday, February 24, 2006 12:16 PM](#)

### [The 3 Users](#)

Envisioning and building out the small business application suite over the last four years represents one of the purest forms of software development. I really state that without

bias. Any effort that begins with only open ended questions (and a totally open mind), has the customer at the center of the universe and is powered by the efforts of a deeply dedicated group of professionals, represents to me the best in discovery and invention. That's the R&D perspective ☺. Even more important and what really matters at the end of the day is the benefits the invention provides the users. The small business application suite of products was built with three key users in mind:

- 1) Small business users
- 2) Accounting Professional users
- 3) Independent Software Vendors

Each feature and design decision went through a stringent litmus test of value for these three users. And within each use case, were multiple scenarios that we were solving for:

- For the small business we were focused on building automation across software boundaries as I stated earlier. Our goal was to provide the right information, to the right person, at the right time without the need for any type of workarounds. For this purpose we focused heavily on the roles and day to day activities of the owner, the office manager, the book keeper, the sales person, the marketing person, and the service person within a small business organization. Of course as any of us who has spent any time with a small business know, many of these roles are performed by the same person and therefore ensuring consistency in ease of use and functionality was super important to us.
- For the accounting professional we wanted to provide the most useful view of the financial transactions of their clients using SBA. To help them identify any transaction issue, to help them share data with the greatest of ease, to help them reconcile and close the books most efficiently and to provide them all the data they needed to file taxes and paperwork on behalf of their clients
- For the ISVs we wanted to provide the cleanest most efficient interface to extend and enhance our products, to enable the best customizations / integrations with their solutions and the most effective design and development environment

Now that our first major release in its entirety (the whole suite) is in the market, I have received valuable feedback and comments from these users. I will consolidate and devote my next posting to reflecting a cross section of the feedback we have received from our user base. I will also provide links to the professional reviews of our product set and then I will provide my perspective on all of this ☺.

Ralph Waldo Emerson is believed to have said that "the rewards of a job well done, is to have done it". Sure that makes sense and I agree that there is an intrinsic satisfaction at accomplishing something big. But I think even more gratifying is to see others benefiting from it. The next post will provide context on just that!

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
[Thursday, February 23, 2006 9:00 AM](#)

## **The epiphany**

In any endeavor like this, it is always good to go back to the beginning to provide some perspective and I will attempt to do that in as brief a manner as possible ☺. The journey to build SBA, the BCM feature area for Outlook and POS began in early 2002 with an intense multi city; multi country research study to understand the processes and pain points of small businesses. The research was observational in nature and covered businesses from every major vertical industry from restaurants to travel agencies, from jewelry stores to financial services organization. We spent the better part of a year conducting this research

and watching small businesses run their day to day operations. It soon became apparent that no matter what industry area we studied, every small business spent a considerable amount of non value added time and effort looking for information they needed, re-entering data and using several manual workarounds as they went about their day to day routine of selling, marketing and servicing their clients and filing taxes, paying employees and complying with various state and federal regulations. While each organization had a lot of good data, these were not tied together and predominantly lived in independent islands of automation and in many cases just on paper. Many businesses had put together workarounds to use this disconnected information in their day to day activities and had given up on software solving these problems.

One of my first customer visits was to a small food wholesaler in southern California. I watched the owner of this business along with the office manager pull together a marketing campaign. It began with the two of them sitting together and creating an excel spreadsheet with items they wanted to promote the next day. They started off by going through the company's accounting system and identifying items that were in stock and which would perish in a few days. They then manually entered that data into excel to create different price points to promote the products at various volumes. The owner constantly looked at the costs and margins in the accounting system to make the final decision. He then cut and paste the excel spreadsheet into a word document where he then added more information and content on the promotion. The office manager then merged the word document with the addresses of 300 of their customers which they pulled out of outlook and then sent this information to an e-fax software. He put his own home fax number as the last number on the sheet as a check point. The next morning as the customers began to roll in and buy the products they were not able to track the specific customer to the promotion as they issued invoices and received payments. The owner was unable to track the trends, purchase history and payments of all his customers in an easy manner. Many of the reports he needed were not easy to generate and many of the decisions he was making on sales, marketing, inventory purchasing and pricing were based on gut feel and instinct. In order to promote a few products and sell them to the customers they had to traverse the accounting system, excel, word, outlook and the POS system without ever being able to use the information for any future decision making or analysis.

The essence of this observation was duplicated many times over regardless of the industry. The business we were studying would change but the underlying problems were systemic. The good news was that most of these businesses were using MS office and the ubiquity and ease of use of the productivity apps were doing the job. However accounting, marketing and sales systems were neither talking to each other or too the productivity or the communication apps. The solution suddenly loomed large in front of us. We had to step back and create solutions that allowed the small business user to access any data they wanted, when they wanted and in a manner that was easy and instinctive. The goal being to build software for the small business that mapped to the roles and processes within their organizations. Nothing like that existed in the marketplace and for that matter we were hard pressed to identify any small business application innovation for over a decade. It suddenly became a mission for us and the first technical ideas around implementing such a solution began to emerge as we stood surrounded with all the data from our customer visits and a white board with a marker.

Nearly four years later we have a full suite from BCM to SBA to POS to Payroll to Credit Card Processing !. A small business can use this new business suite just as simply and easily as any office app and they all work together. It's that simple!. I am looking forward to my next visit to S CA and dropping by to see how my friends at the small

wholesale outlet are doing with their use of Office SBE and SBA. I hope they get to go home a few minutes earlier, make decisions with a little less pain and track their business with a little more ease than they used to. As software professionals there can be nothing more gratifying!

And the work has just begun. The innovations we are working on for the next release will truly notch this up a level ☺

posted by [Rajat Taneja](#) | [0 Comments](#)  
[Wednesday, February 22, 2006 12:19 PM](#)

### Welcome !

On Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Bill Gates, chairman and chief Software Architect, Microsoft Corporation *announced* general availability of **Microsoft Office Small Business Accounting 2006** along with a brand new edition of Office for small businesses called **Office Small Business Management Edition** . These newest member of the Microsoft Office System of products are now available in over 5,000 retail stores, through PC OEM manufacturers like Dell, Gateway, HP and through Microsoft's vast network of resellers across the USA. SBA along with Microsoft's Outlook with business contact manager (BCM) represents the most significant innovation in the small business application space in the last 15 years. It is for the first time, a small business will be able to seamlessly automate processes across their **sales, marketing, service and financial functions**, providing their employees with the information they need, when they need it and where they need it. Approximately 300 dedicated R&D professionals built these products over the last 4 years with a shared passion to serve small businesses and a singular belief that software can truly help its users realize their potential. As we celebrate this important release, I am reminded of the words of Winston Churchill, that "this is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end, this my friends is simply the end of the beginning" . Work on the next versions of these products is well underway and there are significant features and innovations that are in the pipeline that will continue to benefit our customers and partners as they use these products.

Welcome to my blog. My name is Rajat Taneja and I am responsible for Microsoft's small business applications and online services organization. The portfolio of products we develop in the team includes a [suite of hosted online services](#) (e-marketing, e-commerce, search services, online scheduling, banner advertising, customer management and web site analytics), [Business Contact Manager](#) for Microsoft® Office Outlook® 2003, [Microsoft Retail Management System](#), [Microsoft Point of Sale software](#) and the recently released [Microsoft® Office Small Business Accounting 2006](#) product line. I have been with the company for nearly 10 years and have had the privilege of leading Microsoft's efforts in the small business application area for the last 5 years. I am delighted to publish this blog to establish a more direct connection with our customers and partners and periodically share news about our upcoming innovations and also various tips around maximizing the use and benefit of our product line. I also eagerly look forward to comments and feedback on our small business products and services. In order to give different view points and perspectives, I will also from time to time invite guest writers to publish thoughts and comments on the blog.

I look forward to this direct dialog with our customers and partners and welcome comments and suggestions on both my postings and recommendations for other topics that you would

like me to write about. I will definitely attempt to do so if I can add value.  
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The latest survey results were announced as millions of Americans continue working to meet the April 17 deadline for filing their state and federal income tax forms.

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- \* Younger people ages 18-24 are more likely to use their refunds to buy products than older people aged 55-64 (60% and 11 % respectively)
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The poll of 1,000 adults was conducted March 17 - 19, 2006 by Synovate, and has a margin of error of plus or minus four percent.

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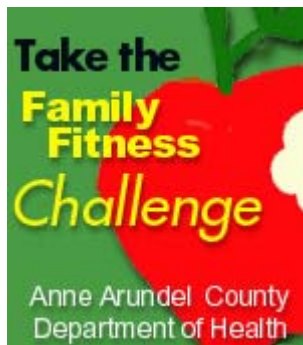


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## Survey: 50 percent of taxpayers will invest or pay off debts

By ELIZABETH LEIS, Staff Writer

Picture taking a cruise around the ports of Europe, buying a pair of kayaks or installing a new washer and dryer.

With income tax returns due tomorrow, it's soothing to think about the endless possibilities for spending the average federal tax refund of \$2,290.

But instead of luxuries or extravagances, a new survey found that more than 50 percent of people getting money back on federal taxes this year will invest it or use it to pay off debts.

"We expect when Americans get a windfall they will spend it on a nice dinner, or to have a good time," said Edward Segal, a spokesman for **Taxsoftware.com**, which conducted the survey of 1,000 people. "It's a sign of the times, as people are so worried about the economy."

Even the second most popular answer had an element of investment to it. Thirty percent of those surveyed by the tax preparation firm said they would use at least some of the money to make home improvements. Another 20 percent said they'd use it toward paying off a mortgage or education loans, and an equal percentage said they'd give some of it charity.

Only 24 percent said they would buy products, and just 16 percent said they would take a vacation.

Households with incomes over \$50,000 are more likely to use the refunds for savings or investments than those making less than \$25,000, according to the survey. While 60 percent of taxpayers from age 18 to 24 were more likely to use refunds to buy products, only 11 percent of older people expected to use their money that way.

"That's part of being a young person," Mr. Segal said. "Young people think they'll never die. That's human nature."

He said the choice for how to use a refund "should reflect personal



priorities and concerns."



Financial adviser David B. Magayna is less forgiving.

President of Gemini Financial Services in Odenton, he wouldn't frown on making a down payment for a boat, if the buyer has no debt. But in most cases, he advises going out for a nice dinner and socking the rest of the money away.



He warns that Social Security, Medicare and pension plans may not cover all their costs later in life.

"Individuals will be more dependent on their own personal savings," he said.

If the refund can be significant, a taxpayer may want to adjust his withholdings for the 2006 tax year, Mr. Magayna said.



Kurt Sturn, a founder and partner in Sturn Wagner Lombardo & Co. in Parole, said he's seen his clients change what they spend their refunds on as they grow older.



"When they're younger, they tend to use refunds to pay off credit cards," he said. "As they get married and have kids, it's education. It's like, 'Hey, we can pay the tuition this month.' As they get older it goes toward splurging, like trips to Europe."

Other options for the refund include putting some money into a car, such as new tires or even minor maintenance like an oil change, which can extend the car's life and save money in the long run.



Another idea? Improving energy efficiency around the house, such as caulking windows or replacing an old air conditioner with an Energy Star air conditioner. That could reduce the sticker shock from an increase in electrical bills this summer.

Internal Revenue Service spokesman Jim Dupree said although Maryland residents have until tomorrow to file, procrastination can impinge on accuracy. Taxpayers received three extra days this year since April 15 fell on a Saturday and today is a state holiday in Massachusetts, where returns are processed.

"Rushing at the last minute can cause you to make mistakes," he said. "It can delay processing of your return, or you can overlook a tax benefit."

Those who file over the Internet - 1,072,335 people in Maryland as of Thursday - can have a refund sent directly into a bank account. If you e-file and have your refund directly deposited, you should get your money in two weeks.

The IRS offers its "Where's My Refund" service, which allows checking on the status of federal tax returns. More than 21 million people have used it so far, with 81 percent successfully finding the information, Mr. Dupree said.

Before using the service, taxpayers should have their Social Security number, filing status and the exact amount of the refund. Don't be fooled by any "phishing" scam of e-mails allegedly from the IRS - it's not in the business of sending out unsolicited e-mails.

Those who need help with their state returns can head to the state Comptroller's Office at 80 Calvert St. in Annapolis, where a tax assistance center will be open until 7 p.m. today and tomorrow. You should bring your completed federal tax return, state W-2 form and photo identification.

Other things that could delay a refund are not signing and dating your return, looking in the wrong column or row, or failing to use correct postage, Mr. Dupree said. Remember that the price of stamps went up to 39 cents in January.

Another thing to remember: The closer you get to tomorrow's deadline, the more likely it is that the refund won't arrive for up to two months.

- No Jumps-

*Published April 17, 2006, [The Capital](#), Annapolis, Md.  
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### Most Americans Plan to Use Their Tax Refunds for Savings, Investments, or to Pay Off Debt

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CONTACT: Edward Segal of **Taxsoftware.com**, +1-301-320-7080, help@taxsoftware.com

Web site: <http://www.taxsoftware.com/>

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Monday April 3, 7:00 am ET

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### Hardware News

Supporting remote branches that don't have an IT person on-site can be a daunting task for the IT Department. Successful management of a remote office starts with the right infrastructure. Learn more about what an effective branch office infrastructure can entail in the upcoming BANK tech-trends - subscribe today.

Hewlett-Packard is augmenting its laser printer line-up with the addition of eight new printers, from single-function monochrome models to large workgroup printers. The Color LaserJet 2600 becomes HP's new entry-level color laser printer, coming in under the current \$399 Color LaserJet 2600. Many banks only need monochrome printers, and HP plans to unveil four new monochrome models for their needs: the LaserJet 3050, 3052, 3055, and 3390 which will range in price from \$129 to \$699. Finally, the \$129 LaserJet 1018 is a new personal single-function monochrome printer to fit into tight places on a crowded desk. On the other end of the spectrum, the \$2,299 LaserJet 4600 can print wide-format pages for the whole accounting department.

MGE announced two uninterruptible power supplies for protecting small business: the MGE 1000VA and 1100VA are line-interactive UPSes that can be remotely managed from a Web browser using the Simple Network Management Protocol. Line-interactive UPSes use an inverter/converter, battery charger, inverter and source selection switch. The inverter/converter charges the battery and converts power from DC to AC. When power is available, the inverter/converter charges the battery. When the power fails, the battery provides the power to the server or workstation. An offline UPS is commonly used with low-end gear - when power fails, the UPS detects the lack of power and switches to the battery. The UPSes work with Windows XP and Linux, and start at \$115.

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## Software Updates

A new backup vendor called Vembu Technologies offers some interesting new features that banks may want to take advantage of. There are three flavors of Vembu's backup products: StoreGrid Version 2.0: Free (for peer-to-peer backups between three computers), Professional (client-server) and Service Provider. Service Provider offers remote backup from your bank to an ISP, value-added reseller, or any other organization willing to host the files. If you have a second location or access to a remote server to hold backup files, the Professional version is a good choice.

offers remote backups as well. Vembu restricts the software to only three computers on and only supports Windows computers, but the price is right - free. Meanwhile StoreGrid normal list of high end backup features, including compression, encryption, full and incremental backups, Continuous Data Protection for immediate file changes, and flexible scheduling client. Vembu's user interface is a browser and pricing starts at \$29.95 per user per year professional version, plus \$19.95 per computer to handle open Exchange files.

Faster software deployment, simplified patch management, regular hardware inventory software-license monitoring and locked-down security settings are all benefits gained from using a desktop-management suite. Unfortunately, many suites are difficult to set up and are beyond the budget of many banks. However, there are some packages that offer and are tailored to small to mid-sized organizations. We will cover one in the upcoming tech-trends- subscribe now.

Any bank that is looking to deploy Linux on their servers should take a look at Security Enhanced Linux (SE Linux). SE Linux is not a Linux distribution, such as SuSE or Red Hat, but is a set of modifications to the Linux kernel that limit the access that applications have to memory, operating system configuration files and other critical components of a server or PC operating system. SE Linux uses mandatory access controls to limit applications' access only to the minimum resources they need to run. The goal is to apply SE Linux to commercial off-the-shelf products to provide a higher level of security. SE Linux has been included in Red Hat Enterprise Linux as Red Hat's Fedora Core version 4 and the recently released version 5. However, it is not enabled by default, since the policies can disrupt some commonly used system processes and applications according to Red Hat developers.

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## ATMs/Kiosks

The fifth annual KioskCom Excellence Awards were presented last week and Storm Solutions in conjunction with WebRaiser Technologies won first place for best kiosk application in a financial service. The CashStorm kiosk targets "unbanked" households, and the two companies are working together to produce a network of self-service cash payment stations that are fully automated and multilingual.

Meanwhile, ATM manufacturer Tranax Technologies and TIO Networks (formerly Info Touch Technologies) announced a strategic partnership that will also target the self-service market. The first phase of the partnership is

to launch a joint hybrid ATM initiative using Tranax's Mini-Bank 4000 series ATMs. TIO's services include bill payment, stored value card dispensing and reloading, and prepaid services.

Discover card holders can now use their cards at ATMs on the Pulse network. The introduction of Pulse ATM acceptance follows Discover Financial Services' acquisition of the Pulse network last year and means Discover card holders have access to 350,000 ATMs nationwide, a 58 percent increase.

**\*\*\* ATMs/Kiosks Sponsored by Nationwide Money Services \*\*\***

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Nationwide Money Services, Inc.'s Branded Cash Program is the answer. Fully endorsed by the Community Bank Connection, the Virginia Bankers Bank and several credit union organizations, our Branded Cash Program provides the ATM equipment, great locations, processing, maintenance, insurance, marketing rights and surcharge free transactions for your cardholders, you only provide the cash and cash services for the ATM just as you would if you owned them. The ATMs look and act like your own, extending your reach or filling out your current market. Our current Bank partners include: First Charter, Lumbee Guaranty, Wilmington Savings Fund Society, Union Bankshares Corporation, Mechanic & Farmers and many more.

NMS also offers their 'ATMs Made Easy' Program for full service ATM management and placement services if you like the idea of having ATMs but don't want the hassle of day to day management and the associated costs for maintenance and unplanned expenses like triple DES.

For more information about the Branded Cash Program contact Bob Colabrese, EVP of Sales & Marketing at:

904-395-1147 [or](#)

[bob.colabrese@GLXS.biz](mailto:bob.colabrese@GLXS.biz)



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### **Biometric Digest Highlights - [WWW.BIODIGEST.COM](http://WWW.BIODIGEST.COM)**

SmartMetric says that they have developed the world's first practical fingerprint microchip/sensor for use in any type of wallet-sized plastic card-credit cards, ID cards, smart cards, drivers licenses, passports and more. SmartMetric's technology stores a person's fingerprint profile in digital form on the microchip. To activate the card for any purpose, the person touches the card in the designated area. Cards using SmartMetric fingerprint sensing technology can be deployed in two forms: a contact card suitable for use in smart card readers, ATM machines and other situations where the card is inserted in a reader; and a contactless card employing RF (radio frequency) signaling.

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### **Wireless World**

ViVOtech, the company holding the largest market share of installed readers for contactless payments, believes that the technology can migrate from the physical point of sale to the online world. According to ViVOtech, laptop and desktop computers will become available within a year with NFC (near-field communication) chips capable of enabling payment transactions.

Consumers shopping online will be able to wave an NFC-enabled cell phone near the embedded chip in their computer to complete a transaction much as they can at a scanner-equipped point of sale in NFC pilots now.

Qualcomm expects the third generation of EVDO (Evolution Data Only) wireless broadband solution to be commercialized within two years and offer substantially more bandwidth than today's DSL and cable broadband offerings: business EVDO solutions will reach 73.5 Mb/s while consumer solutions may hit 14.7 Mb/s download speeds. The currently available EVDO Rev. 0, which is offered for example through Verizon Wireless, delivers an average downlink of 400 - 700 Kb/s and reaches "burst rates" of 2.0 Mb/s.

A firm called iSelfPay is the latest company to launch a new wireless payment service. Virtually any cell phone user can subscribe to iSelfPay; the service provides no constraints on a specific handset or a wireless carrier. Since money is transferred directly from one iSelfPay subscriber to another, which can be a merchant, the firm says that there is no need for a financial institution to be involved.

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## Security Section

Desktop management service provider Everdream announced a service that makes it possible to encrypt or delete data even after a laptop has gone missing. The new Everdream "Theft Recovery Managed Service" allows organizations to retain control over lost or stolen PCs and laptops, while simultaneously assisting law enforcement with the tracking, locating and recovery of computers. The service won't work, however, if the computer's hard disk has been formatted, because the Everdream software resides on the hard disk. The theft recovery service is in addition to Everdream's other services, which include asset management, software distribution, online backup, virus protection and patch management. The new service costs \$6 per computer per month and requires at least one of the other services.

According to the fourth annual CompTIA (Computing Technology Industry Association) study on information security and the workforce, human error was responsible for nearly 60 per cent of information security breaches last year. This figure is significantly higher than the number in 2004, when 47 per cent of security breaches were blamed on human error alone. The CompTIA security study, over the four years it has run, also indicates that malware attacks are a common security concern among respondents. The lack of user awareness, browser-based attacks and remote access, were the next most frequently mentioned security problems.

Whether it is VCR tapes or digital files, your bank needs to have a long term retention policy in place for your security camera system. Security expert Dana Turner notes that retention is generally governed by the state and federal statute of limitations that indicate the time frame within which a crime may be prosecuted - for most banking crimes, this is five (5) years.

Last week AppSense, a supplier of security solutions, announced the release of the AppSense Security Analyzer, a free tool designed to help organizations assess the security health of their PCs, laptops and servers. AppSense Security Analyzer works by simply attempting to undertake a wide range of actions on the target platform without causing any user disruption. After running the tests, the software produces a report indicating the security of each system and highlighting where efforts need to focus to enhance the overall security of the platforms scanned.

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## Technology and Marketing

It is not too late to market your bank's deposit accounts to your customers as tax season wraps up this week. This is especially true if you believe the results of a poll commissioned by **Taxsoftware.com** that shows a majority of Americans will use the tax refunds they expect to receive this year for savings or investments (55%), or to pay off debts (52%). A

**Taxsoftware.com** spokesperson noted that "Americans are more likely to

visit their financial institutions or stockbrokers after receiving their refund checks than go to the mall or shop online."

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## Online Banking/E-Commerce/Website Design

Yodlee has entered the online account opening market with their AccountOpening product. AccountOpening allows banks to use their website, self-service branch kiosk and other channels to open new accounts and fund them immediately through an automated process that links credit databases, normalizes data and creates a dashboard in real-time so banks can immediately assess risk for any consumer opening an account.

Free banking and high-yield savings incentives, combined with fewer security concerns, have encouraged more consumers to adopt online banking, according to research from Web metrics firm ComScore Networks. In a recent comScore survey, 33% of new online bankers cited incentives, particularly free banking products, as influencing their decision to try online banking, while 23% cited reduced security concerns.

Digital Insight announced the results of an in-depth research study that demonstrates online bill payment users provide significantly greater return than offline customers and represent the most attractive customer demographic for banks. Here are their findings:

- \* Online bill payment users maintained aggregate balances 257% greater, on average, than offline customers.
- \* Online bill payment users maintained deposit balances 205% greater, on average, than offline customers.
- \* Online bill payment users maintained loan balances 284% greater, on average, than offline customers.
- \* Financial institutions participating in the study retained online bill payment users at a rate up to 78% higher than offline customers.

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## Internet Access

SonicWall made its name in the small office market, and although the company is expanding rapidly into the enterprise, products such as the SSL-VPN 200 show that they still have a lot to offer smaller organizations. This VPN (virtual private network) appliance combines the ease-of-use advantage associated with SSL VPNs with a smaller form factor and an attractive price tag: less than \$600 for roughly 10 concurrent SSL VPN tunnels. SSL VPNs enable secure access to Web applications, file servers, Telnet, and such via the basic browser portal, meaning without the need for additional client software. For more advanced network applications, SonicWall provides an ActiveX on-demand client called NetExtender. For larger banks, SonicWall offers the SSL-VPN 2000 for around \$2,300.

iS3, Inc., maker of the anti-Spyware solution STOPzilla, announced it is giving banks the opportunity to provide ZILLAbar 2.0, iS3's anti-Phishing product, to their customers without cost. The product, which was designed to be co-branded with the bank's logo, typeface and color scheme, works with Internet Explorer to provide protection against phishing and identity theft. As part of its offer, iS3 will provide banks updates, upgrades and other maintenance. iS3 will also share adjusted gross revenues with the participating institution when users purchase subscriptions to anti-Spyware and Identity Theft Protection services through the ZILLAbar.

It is surprisingly easy to change the font size in Internet Explorer on many websites. If you have a wheel mouse and are using Internet Explorer you can use the wheel to alter the size of the text on many sites. To do so, just hold down the [CTRL] key as you spin the button up and down. As you do, the text will either increase or decrease depending on which way you move the wheel.

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## Call Centers

While easily overlooked as a commodity item, headsets are actually supercritical to agent performance. Noise can be a huge problem in call centers, so it is often advisable to consider special noise reducing headsets. ProTech Communications has a line for loud centers called Trinity, while the Sennheiser CC500 series headsets are a good choice for extended periods of heavy-duty use in high noise-level, open-plan offices and contact centers. One company called Vonia is touting their "bone conducting headsets." Converted vibration signals go through the temple of a person's head and stimulate the auditory nerve via bone vibrations. This process allows sounds to bypass the eardrum. The company suggests that when you use something else to cover the ears, the bone-conducting headsets should work well in loud places.

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