

**Institute of Certified
Bookkeepers Software
Review**

December 2008

Solar Accounts

Company background

Mark McLaren – Managing Director explains!

Mark McLaren, Managing Director and founder of Solar Accounts explains the motives behind the company's set-up: 'Back in 2005 I was a self-employed IT consultant. I was frustrated with the existing software accounting packages available for people like me. The software that was available was complicated and clearly aimed at accountants or largish businesses. It was also expensive. I decided to develop a simple accounting package that was accessible and simple to use.'

The product

A comprehensive, accounting package designed for self employed individuals and small businesses.

After four months public testing, version 1.0 was released in May 2008. Version 2.0 has just been released to support the new VAT rate change on 1st December 2008.

This review has been carried out on version 2.0 of the package.

O/S support is provided on Windows XP or Vista at present and is UK specific.

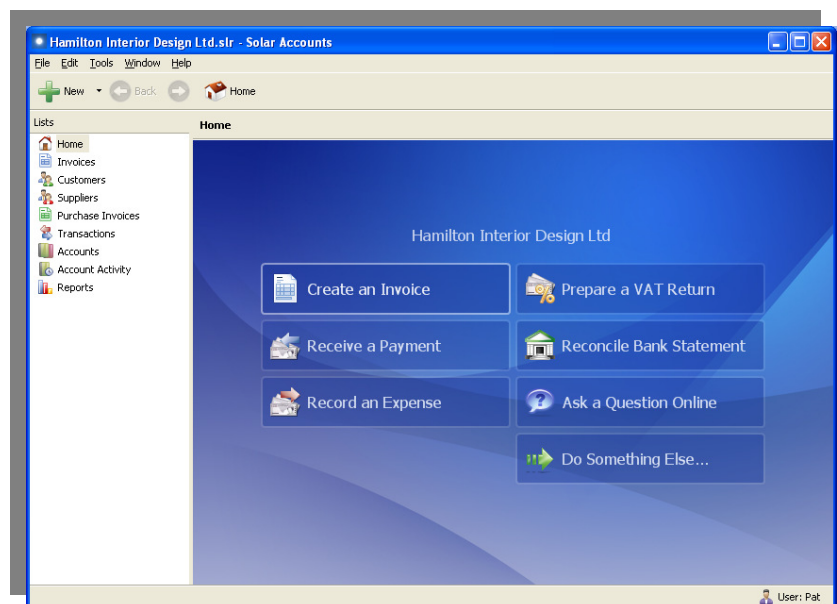
Technical support is also provided via e-mail.

Present cost of package £99 plus VAT, and the software can be used on up to three computers, owned by a single business.

Downloadable as a free trial, to try before you buy.

www.solaraccounts.co.uk

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Key benefits

- ✓ Downloadable as a free trial before purchase
- ✓ The package can be used for multiple companies by simply creating a new data file
- ✓ No annual subscription fees
- ✓ A licence entitles the user to free upgrades to any version that Solar Accounts release within 6 months of the purchase of the package.
- ✓ Supports the VAT flat rate scheme
- ✓ Supports the PayPal system and has facility for posting PayPal fees
- ✓ Data can be exported to CSV files in Sage format
- ✓ Useful online forum to ask questions

Strengths

A very user-friendly piece of software, navigation is straight forward and provides a clean visual look to the user.

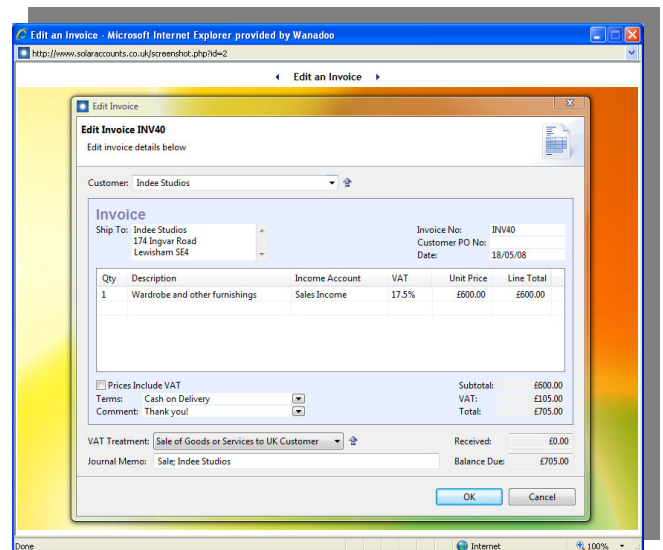
The set up is very streamlined and has been designed to be easy. The data is completely secure as it's only stored on your computer. There is no need to be connected to the internet to work on your accounts. You will need internet connection to use the forum facility obviously.

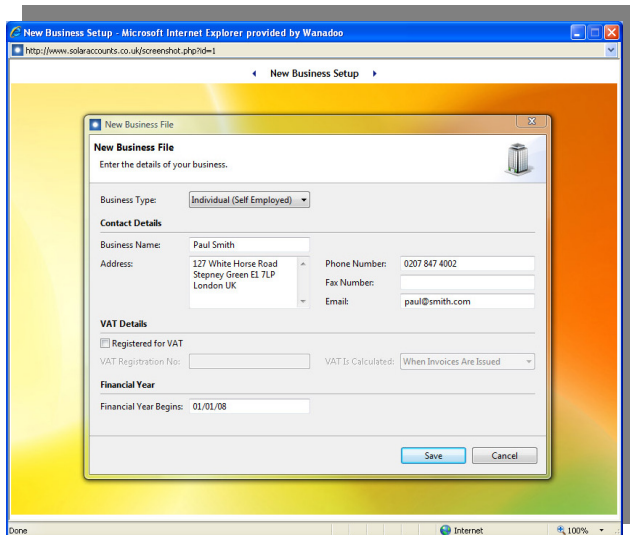
Invoicing, payments and receipts can be posted from one screen.

The Transactions facility (audit trail) is very comprehensive and clearly shows the debit and credit postings that relate to a particular transaction. Advanced filter of criteria is also possible.

Again the help contents is straight forward, logical and easy to find.

Final reports such as Profit & Loss and Balance Sheets have a multiple view facility, which means you can view previous year's accounts alongside the current year, on screen and to print off, particularly good for reviewing accounts with a client.





The software has the capacity to create multiple companies and is therefore cost effective against other leading software packages, where licensing can be very expensive.

The try-before-you-buy option is very useful, if it does not suit your business, you do not buy.

Being able to ask questions online in a forum is useful, you also have the option not to publish your question if you wish.

The package will cope with the day to day bookkeeping and year end adjustments required for a bookkeeping practice. There are also reseller opportunities for this package.

Weaknesses

Accounting software packages are usually advertised as easy to use, but there is still a need to have a basic bookkeeping knowledge to use the package and a novice still could confuse postings and where they appear in the chart of accounts, as it “does it all for you”

Terminology of accounts could be an issue for a beginner, the product is probably best suited to a trained bookkeeper who wishes to use a cost effective package, or a business owner who has the support of a bookkeeper or accountant.

Support is only available via e-mail at present, Solar state they aim to respond within one business day; telephone support is not available at present.

As far as we can ascertain, debtor invoices can only be entered as one balance and not as individual invoices; the same applied to creditor invoices.

Value for money

The package does offer value for money; being able to prepare accounts for unlimited companies is very cost effective, in comparison to other market leading accounting software. This is a particularly important issue for the bookkeeper in practice.

Testimonials

The Solar Accounts website carries a number of favourable testimonials of the package; these are from bookkeepers and companies who are currently using the software.

Summary of review

A comprehensive, cost effective piece of software, which is easy and convenient to use, has a clean visual look and would be very useful to bookkeepers in practice.



Disclaimer

The Institute of Certified Bookkeepers having reviewed Solar Accounts accounting software package version 2.0, cannot be held responsible in anyway for the actions of the company Solar Accounts, (Springbok Solutions Ltd) or their software. This review is merely an unbiased overview of the software package.