

Small businesses using Macs have the same financial tasks as those using PCs. But often it's a challenge to find Mac accounting software that's as feature-rich as the Windows version. So if you're in the market for the best financial software for a Mac, what do you need to look out for?

Challenges for small businesses using a Mac

It's likely that if you're a Mac fan and user, you'll have high expectations for the way your accounting software looks and performs. But when we talk to small businesses, it's clear that while Mac users love their Apple products, they're not as affectionate about their financial software. So why is this such a common sentiment?

Software that is just a lift and shift from PC to Mac doesn't leverage the power and design that's at the heart of Apple products. As a Mac user, you probably remember that moment when you first booted up your Mac and thought "Ahh". And it's that emotion that's often lacking while using accounting software.

It's no coincidence that the instant ease of use and logical user interface of Apple products have won countless awards. So when Mac users are confronted with software that doesn't apply human logic to the design or functionality, financial tasks become painful. Accounting software on a Mac should 'just work'.

Mac versions are often lacking in features

Most financial applications are designed for a PC first and then ported over to a Mac as an afterthought. As a result, Mac users are often left with feature lacking versions and poor customer support which is typically focused on PC usage. In many companies, customer support don't fully know about or understand the Mac platform to help with in-depth questions.

It's also common for Mac software versions to also have lots of unnecessary features. This can mean you end up getting a bloated suite of complex and confusing tools instead of what your small business really needs.

Make it a priority to go with software that doesn't tack on features for the sake of it, and gets the balance of simplicity and usability just right. You should have everything you want and need, and no more.

Software should be cross-platform compatible

If your software isn't cross-platform friendly, you risk wasting huge chunks of time using workarounds to collaborate with your financial advisors. For example, if you use a Mac and want to share data with your PC-using accountant, you'll need to export data files to them saved in a Windows format. Even at this stage, you'll often run into compatibility issues.

In the meantime, while your accountant is looking at your data, you won't be able to make changes to it because you can't merge their changes into your existing file. It's only when they're finished with the file that you can re-import it. In many cases, the software won't work on all browsers either, which makes for a poor user experience.

Business apps should integrate with your software

Often Mac accounting software has a limited range of business applications or apps that integrate with it. But if you're a Mac user, you'll no doubt be used to having a variety of products that play nicely with your Apple devices. For example, you might already be using [Basecamp](#), project management software that runs in the cloud, and encourages collaboration online. As well as being easy to use on a Mac, iPad and iPhone, Basecamp also integrates with several other apps.

If you're in the creative industry, [Adobe Creative Cloud](#) may be the way you share files, give feedback or save settings across devices. [Evernote](#) is another handy online tool that lets you collect and find everything that you need, and collaborate with colleagues online.

All of this considered, it makes sense to look out for financial software that is also flexible enough to allow a range of apps to integrate with it. As your company grows, this will make it much easier to manage all aspects of running your business. For example, you could integrate invoicing, time tracking or job system apps with your financial software. Online tools like [Harvest](#), make time tracking simple for small business – and they're Mac-friendly. Harvest is time tracking software that lets you see real-time data to keep projects on time and in budget.

Software needs to be simple and frustration-free

Apple design their products so that they are super simple to use. The financial software you choose for your Mac should be just as easy. You should get one consistent, magical experience, whether you're on a Mac, iPhone, or an iPad. For example, if you're out and about and need to send an invoice, you should be able to do it on your iPad with minimal effort. It should be as easy as a few taps and you're done.

With one version for all devices and browsers, doing business becomes much more pain-free and fun. Like an Apple product 'just works', your online software should too.

Accounting software on a Mac: Seven points to consider

1. **Intuitive and beautiful design matters**

The simple, aesthetically-pleasing form and function of an Apple product is what

makes many Mac users loyal for life. So when it comes to your software, don't skimp on this all-important aspect. Often small business financial applications are bloated with far too many under-used features that only get in the way.

2. **Installation has to be easy**

Just like how a Mac works straight out of the box, your small business software should be easy to start using. With cloud software, there are no installations or downloads. You just log in online at any time, from wherever you are. Updates and upgrades are done automatically, and are free.

3. **Great customer support is important**

As a Mac user, you are used to outstanding customer support. So it makes sense to choose software with the same level of excellent service, who won't cut corners on training staff for Mac usage. No matter how complex your problem is, you should have a qualified person answering your questions. Look for companies that produce guides, videos, tutorials and forums to help you with day-to-day business tasks.

4. **Have all your business data in one place**

Organising your files on a Mac is as simple as 'drag and drop'. So consider financial software that works in the same way. When you can drag and drop and attach source files to your invoices, bills, transactions, fixed assets and contacts, your company documents can all live in one place online. Some software will also allow you to email files straight into your accounting application.

5. **Collaborate more with your team**

A core belief at Apple is that "collaboration is essential for innovation". Follow their lead, and ensure that your financial application takes collaboration seriously. Look for software that lets you have as many users as you want, at no extra cost. This will help you collaborate with your accountant or bookkeeper and get the advice you need, when you need it. Your business will be in a much better position to innovate and be successful.

6. **Use online business tools that integrate**

Apple products have a huge range of third-party applications that all work seamlessly together. So don't restrict your business growth by using software that won't integrate with other apps. Your small business will benefit and run smarter when you can integrate apps with your accounting software to manage all aspects of it from one place. For example, if you're an [online retail business](#), you could use cloud-based applications to stay competitive and enhance your customers' experience.

7. **Stability and security is key**

Macs are secure and stable, and not as susceptible to the viruses or hacking that some hardware is prone to. In the same way, the best online accounting software heavily protects your sensitive financial data. Companies that store your data in offsite servers ensure that your information is protected with the highest level of security. All data is encrypted to the same level as your internet banking.

Make business fun again

As a Mac fan, you'll have a deep-seated appreciation for software that puts ease of use and beautiful design first. Naturally, this means you'll gravitate towards software that also reflects those qualities. So why not choose a product that not only delights you, but makes business and life easier?

When you're having fun, and excited about using your accounting software, you'll be much more in tune with your financial situation and in a better position to grow. And that's got to be good for business.