



THE 2025

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

BUYER'S GUIDE

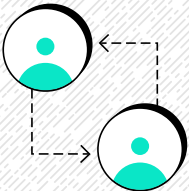
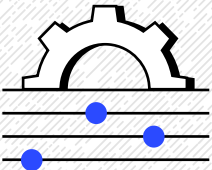



Navigating the world of practice management software can be a daunting task. This guide is designed to streamline the process, providing purchasers with the essential knowledge and tools they need to make an informed decision.

Understanding Practice Management Software

Before diving into the various options available, it's important to understand the building blocks of practice management and how it can benefit your practice. Practice management software is designed to help manage and organize day-to-day operations of your accounting firm. It can help streamline processes such as client relationship management, billing and invoicing, engagements, workflow, and document management.

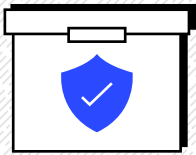
Practice management software plays a vital role in the efficient operation of accounting firms because it streamlines various tasks, automates processes, and enhances overall productivity. It offers a range of features designed specifically for accountants, and their clients, to manage client information, track time and billing, handle documents, and facilitate communication.

	<p>Client Relationship Management (CRM): Practice management software allows for efficient tracking and management of contacts, clients, and groups, including a one-stop shop for each client with email history, files visible to and relevant to the client, invoicing details, and a client portal.</p>
	<p>Engagements: Practice management covers the entire client journey – from prospect to conversion, proposal to payment. Send proposed statements of work, automate project creation, collect payment, and track data by engagements.</p>
	<p>Billing and Invoicing: Automate invoicing procedures, track billable hours, and create customized invoices. Include payment collection and options for client convenience and firm revenue management.</p>



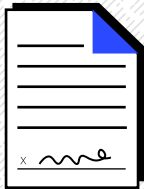
Task Management and Workflow Automation:

Routine tasks can be templated, and work assignments can be tracked, ensuring that projects are completed in a timely manner. Adding automations ensures that the right assignee gets notified immediately, the status of the task changes, or an email gets sent to the client.



Document Management:

Securely exchange, store, and retrieve files. Know exactly what's shared with the client. And store workpapers alongside them for easy reference.



eSignatures:

Collect unlimited eSignatures. Build templates for commonly used eSignature requests. Don't forget to use due dates and reminders to keep your clients on task.



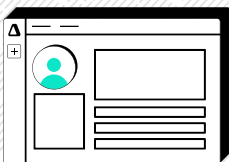
Time Tracking:

Track the time spent on each client or project, ensuring accurate billing and efficient time management. Check pre-built reports to assess staff utilization and productivity as well as client profitability.



Integration:

Connect with other accounting software and tools, enhancing efficiency and reducing manual data entry.



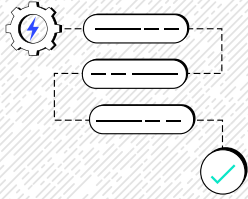
Client Portal:

Securely interact with clients through a branded web and mobile application. Send and accept engagements, collect payments, share and receive documents, and track client requests.



Data & Reports:

Access your data in real time with visualizations and charts that are easy to understand. Set alerts and reports for when things get busy so you can stay on top of what's happening in your business.




Bulk actions & automations:

With so many capabilities in one software, take advantage of conducting one to many (or bulk) actions. Filter your list and select those that need the applicable action (email, task, client request, invoice, client portal invitation, organizer, etc.).

Many or all of these should be enhanced with AI functionality. AI is moving at such an astronomical pace, and if you're considering a software that hasn't incorporated it in some fashion, it is likely that they will be left behind.

Keep in mind, AI can both be seen and unseen. And, though automations are different from AI, make sure to include Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in your evaluations. The outcome you're looking to drive is improved processes and outcomes. Both AI and RPA contribute to this.





Practice management software provides accountants with a comprehensive toolset to streamline their workflows and enhance productivity. By centralizing client information, automating engagements, managing documents, associating time to service items, and facilitating communication, accountants can effectively manage their workload and deliver quality services to their clients.

Point Solutions &

Practice Management Software

Practice Management solutions and point solutions differ in terms of their capabilities. Practice Management solutions consist of various functionalities, such as Document Management, Time & Billing, and Workflow, into a single platform, providing a comprehensive solution for managing all aspects of a professional practice. ▼▼▼

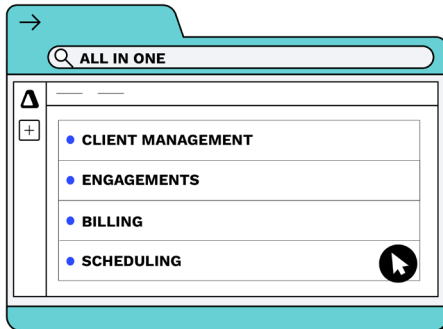
On the other hand, point solutions are more focused on specific aspects, offering targeted solutions for specific needs. For instance, a vendor might specialize in Document Management,

Quick aside: Some may even talk about this environment as a series of integrations. What this is, when done right, is even better. No separate logins and UIs. All the same product.

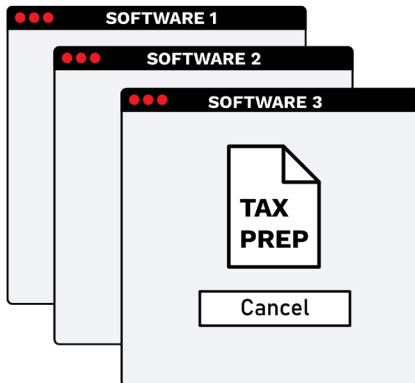
offering advanced features for organizing and accessing documents efficiently. Another might focus exclusively on eSignatures, providing a secure and streamlined process for electronically signing and managing documents.

Or another point solution might focus on the Client Portal, offering a user-friendly interface and robust features for seamless collaboration and communication between professionals and clients. Each of these solutions caters to different needs and provides specialized tools to enhance productivity and efficiency in specific areas of practice management.

Users may experience increased functionality in the area of focus that a point solution provides. However, they may miss out on impactful efficiency gains, reporting insights, smooth collaboration, and other cross-functional benefits that a complete practice management solution offers. You will need to consider the monetary costs, the time it takes to train and adopt, and how (or if) those point solutions work with your existing tools.



Practice management software offers a comprehensive platform that integrates various functions like client management, engagements, billing, scheduling, task automation, document management, and analytics. It can provide efficiency gains, decrease context switching, improve client and staff experiences, and more.



Point solutions software, on the other hand, narrows its focus on specific tasks or areas such as accounting, bookkeeping, tax preparation, audit management, financial reporting, client feedback tools, or website chat. These tools are often singular, and not necessarily designed to integrate with other functions your firm may need.



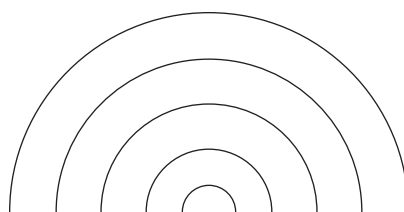
Essential Features of Practice Management Software

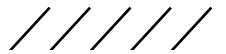
When considering accounting practice management software, it is important to prioritize certain key features. The more traditional scope of practice management checks the boxes for project management, time tracking, and invoicing. If you're looking for a more robust practice management software to meet the needs of your accounting firm, look for these key features:

CRM	Project Management	Client Intake	Reporting & Analytics	Secure File Management	Time & Billing	Payments
Contacts, Clients, Groups	Workflow Automations	Custom Portal	Alerts & Scheduled reports	Secure links	Track time	Saved payment details
Custom Fields	Capacity planning	Engagements	Pre-built dashboards	Request & share	Service items & rates	Recurring payments
Email	Task creation automation	Automated client reminders	AI-powered search	eSignatures	Invoicing	Competitive rates
AI contact analysis				AI-powered file naming		

*items bolded are AI or Rules-Based Automation.

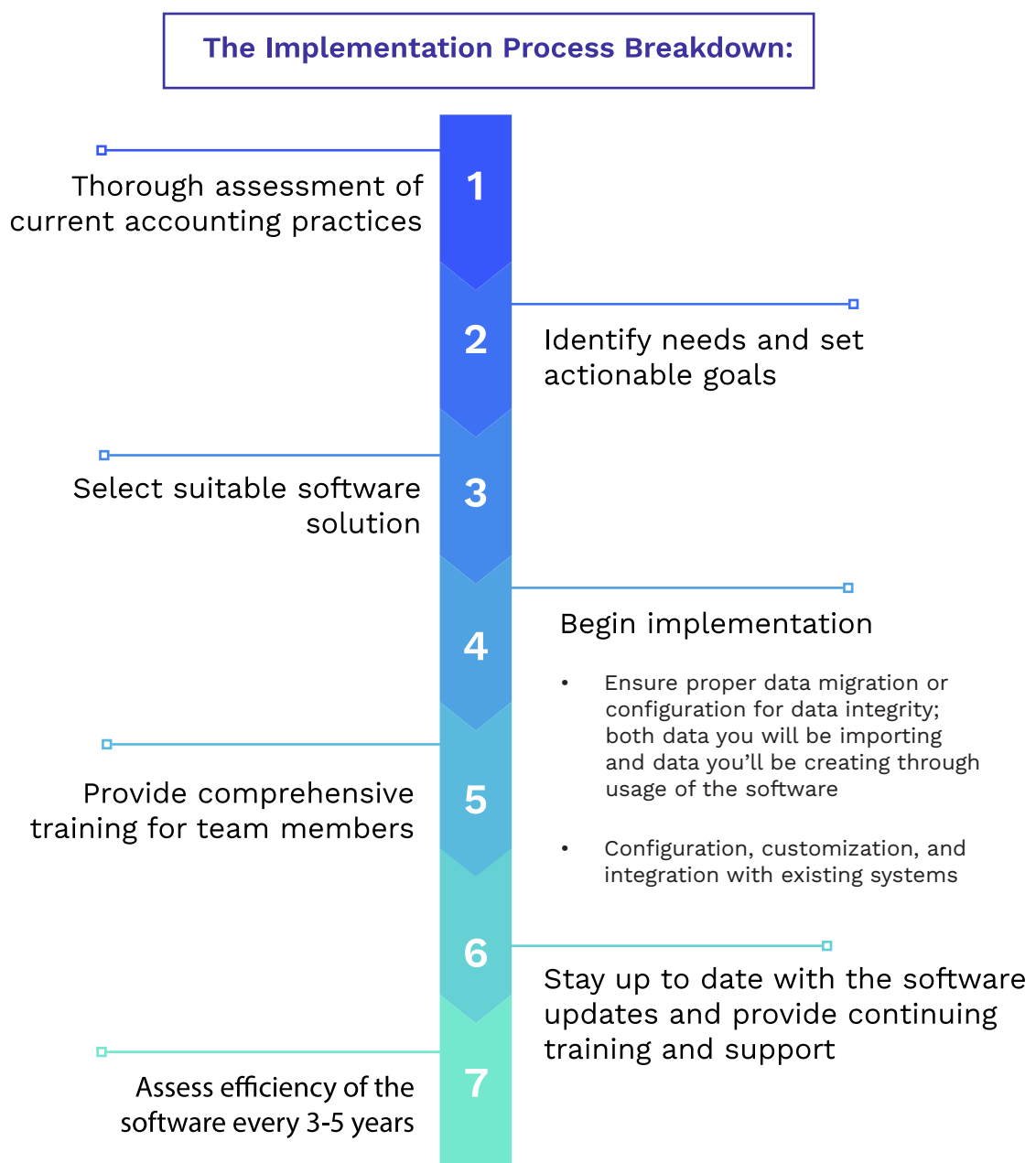
These essential features ensure a comprehensive and streamlined practice management system to effectively organize and optimize accounting operations. Keep in mind that your firm may not need every single one of these features yet, so establish a consensus on your biggest pain points and the features that would help decrease or eliminate those pains. Then you can prioritize how to best purchase, implement & adopt practice management software.





Implementation

To implement accounting practice management software effectively, it is crucial to have stakeholder buy-in and an administrative owner of the software. Together, the stakeholder(s) and the administrator need to establish 2-3 key objectives they want to accomplish with a practice management software. This will help orient you on where to start with implementation, migration, and adoption and help you gain and maintain the momentum the firm needs in order to see the greatest impact.



Evaluating Your Practice's Needs

Every practice is unique, and so are its practice management software needs. Before purchasing any software, it is essential that current operations and future desires are clearly understood, defined and agreed upon.

Current Processes & Operations	Future Desires	Stakeholder alignment

To be successful, you have to start by evaluating your current accounting process, looking for any areas that are time-consuming or prone to errors.

Questions to ask:

- Do we have uniform processes? If so, are they adhered to?
 - Can these processes be improved?
- Where do I have to go to get work done?
- Where do I have the most busy work?
- Where are the most mistakes made?
- Given technology today, what can be sped up or automated?

Next, consider your business growth plans.

Questions to ask:

- What are your plans or hopes for growth?
 - Adding clients?
 - Adding employees?
 - Adding services?
 - Specializing?
- What are your plans to support administrative or technical responsibilities?
 - Dedicated hire?
 - Technology?
- How will you achieve your desired growth?

Lastly, assess your budgetary constraints. Although high-quality software is indeed an investment, it's essential to strike a balance between the value provided by the software and its cost. Consider not just the upfront expenses, but also the ongoing costs of updates, maintenance, and potential need for additional hardware or IT support.

Questions to ask:

To be successful, you have to start by evaluating your current accounting process, looking for any areas that are time-consuming or prone to errors.

- How will firm members contribute to the decision?
- Who are key stakeholders? This could be partners, stubborn employees, or a potential power user.
- How will you persuade them of the need for this purchase? Make sure to address their concerns.
- Are there any concerns with employees learning the software?
- How will the vendor support implementation and training?
- What does customer support look like?

Capabilities	Canopy	[Company 2]	[Company 3]
Client Communication & Collaboration			
CRM (client list, tags, filters, details, etc.)			
Secure & branded Client Portal (web & app)			
Integrated email (inbox, shared access, attach emails to tasks)			
Automatic client reminders			
Client task request (web & app)			
Document sharing & collection			
Proposals & Engagements			
Client segmentation			
Roles & assignments			
Hybrid/outsourced work assignment, permissions, and security			
Payment collection			
Saved payment details & automated payments			
Client project progress updates			
Comments & mentions for staff			

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The Buying Process

Making the right choice when purchasing practice management software for your accounting firm is essential to streamline your workflow, enhance productivity, and grow your business. This step-by-step guide is designed to assist accountants in navigating the intricacies of the buying process, from preliminary research to implementation. Following these thorough steps will ensure that you select the most suitable software that aligns with your firm's needs, budget, and future growth aspirations.

01

Step 1: Preliminary Research

Before diving into the purchasing process, thorough preliminary research is essential. Look into various software options available in the market, their features, pricing, and customer reviews. Consider reaching out to your industry peers for recommendations.

02

Step 2: Determine Your Needs

Identify the requirements of your accounting practice. This step should be based on the evaluation of your current accounting processes, future growth plans, team's technical skills, and budgetary constraints.

03

Step 3: Seek Expert Opinion

Consider hiring a technology consultant or engaging with software vendors directly to gain an in-depth understanding of the features and benefits of different software solutions.

04

Step 4: Request Software Demonstrations

Request demos from potential vendors. Demos give a practical understanding of how the software works and whether it aligns with your practice's workflow.

05

Step 5: Evaluate Vendor Support

Assess the vendor's support services. You should have access to reliable support for implementation, training, and troubleshooting.

06

Step 6: Finalize Vendor and Negotiate Contract

After thorough evaluation, finalize your vendor. Read the contract carefully before signing, ensuring that it includes necessary provisions for support, updates, and data security.

07

Step 7: Purchase and Implement

Once the contract is signed, proceed with the purchase. Begin the implementation process as planned, starting with software configuration, data import, and team member training.

08

Step 8: Continuous Monitoring and Updating

After going live, continuously monitor the software's performance and ensure it is updated regularly for optimal functionality.

Remember, purchasing practice management software is not simply a one-time event; rather, it is a long-term investment that should bring substantial value and efficiency enhancements to your accounting practice. By implementing the right software solution, you can streamline your operations, improve productivity, create longevity in your firm, and optimize client satisfaction, ultimately driving your practice towards greater success and growth.





Vendor Evaluation

Not all vendors are created equal and it's important for you to learn how to assess vendor credibility and determine which provider can best meet your needs. When considering various practice management software vendors, it's important to conduct a thorough assessment not just of the software, but also of the vendors themselves.

Vendor Reputation

Research the reputation of each vendor. Look at online reviews, testimonials, and any industry awards or recognitions the vendor has received. A vendor with a strong, positive reputation in the accounting software industry is more likely to provide a reliable, high-quality product. Check to see how they're staffing their research and development teams. A vendor with a well staffed research and development team will resolve bugs and create innovative products faster than one with a small team.

Vendor Experience in the Accounting Industry

Assess the software's alignment with accounting needs and its receptiveness to ongoing feedback. Avoid overly generic solutions. Ensure it caters to accountants' specific pain points, as evolving needs require a software that actively seeks feedback to improve its offerings.

Vendor Support and Training

Investigate the vendor's approach to customer service and support. Good vendors provide comprehensive training as part of the software purchase. They should also offer ongoing support for any technical issues that arise.

Data Security

SOC 2 compliance is a security standard invented and maintained by AICPA. If a software is not SOC 2 compliant, seriously consider whether or not you'd feel comfortable storing your data in their application. And with AI being added to most softwares, make sure you understand the vendor's policies on using data with their AI applications.

Reliability

Investigate the vendor’s reliability of their software. Determine if they publicly publish reports on incidents or uptime. You don’t want to purchase a tool that checks all the boxes, but leaves you high and dry in the middle of a busy season.

Scalability

Consider the scalability of each vendor’s software solution. As your practice grows, you want a vendor whose software can scale with you, accommodating increased volume and complexity over time.

Cost

Lastly, evaluate the cost of each vendor’s software. Don’t just consider the upfront purchase price; also take into account ongoing costs such as software updates, support services, and any potential hardware upgrades required. Some vendors will charge extra for their support and upgrades.

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Payment collection			
Saved payment details & automated payments			
Client project progress updates			
Comments & mentions for staff			
Tax Organizer			
Data Driven Firm Management			
Retention rules			
Engagement contract records			
Engagement reports			
Budgeted & actual time			

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About Canopy

Canopy's suite operates on a modern, cloud-based platform that brings live updates to your systems when needed. With a customizable suite entirely based on the needs of your firm, Canopy unlocks the path to success through industry-leading practice management software.

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