

QuickBooks® Online vs Desktop: Which Is Best for My Architecture Firm?

8 min read



When running a business today, it's nearly impossible - and definitely not recommended - to manage your back office with manual bookkeeping and accounting procedures. Not only are manual back-office processes tedious, slow, expensive, and time-consuming, but they also leave room for errors and inaccuracy.

Key Takeaways

- **What Is QuickBooks:** QuickBooks is an all-encompassing, bookkeeping and accounting software solution developed by Intuit. There are several versions of QuickBooks® available, and the one that's right for your business largely depends on...
- **QuickBooks Online vs. QuickBooks Desktop:** QuickBooks® Desktop is only available from your in-office desktop computer. QuickBooks® Online is cloud-based and accessible remotely...
- **Outsourced Back-Office Services and QuickBooks Online:** This enables outsourced providers to function as if they were in the office from a remote location. As a result, the amount of time you need to dedicate to the management of your back office is minimized...

Thankfully, modern technology has delivered a wide array of accounting software solutions designed to meet the back-office needs of a variety of different businesses (various types and sizes) operating across industries.

Which Accounting Software Is Best for Businesses?

[Intuit's QuickBooks](#) holds the lion's share of the market with nearly 90% of small businesses across industries using some version of its software [1]. A slightly smaller portion of medium-sized businesses and a much smaller portion of larger businesses utilize QuickBooks because most large corporations can afford to pay for the development of their own custom-made bookkeeping and accounting software systems.

If your architecture firm falls into the small to medium size range, then you will likely benefit most from choosing to implement QuickBooks in your firm.

What Is QuickBooks?

QuickBooks is an all-encompassing, bookkeeping and accounting software solution developed by Intuit. There are several versions of QuickBooks® available, and the one that's right for your business largely depends on the size of your firm and its individual needs.

The two most popular versions of QuickBooks® are [QuickBooks Online](#) (QBO) and [QuickBooks Desktop](#) (QBD). Each of these versions comes with different packages, customizations, and price points designed to accommodate a wide variety of businesses.

QuickBooks Online vs. QuickBooks Desktop: Which Is Best for Architecture Firms?

QBO and QBD are both excellent accounting [software systems](#). They are quite different, however, so it's important to closely analyze the features and price points available with both versions before selecting the one that's right for your architecture firm. The following considerations can help you determine which is best for your business:

In-Office vs. Cloud-Based

QuickBooks® Desktop is only available from your in-office desktop computer. QuickBooks® Online is cloud-based and accessible remotely. QuickBooks Desktop does offer a mobile app, but it has few features and is primarily for viewing your data remotely.

Features

Both versions provide customers with comprehensive bookkeeping and accounting software features and capabilities. There are, however, some notable differences between QBO and QBD.

QBO-Specific Features:

- Multiple users
- Robust mobile app
- Sales tax calculation
- Multiple platforms
- Automatic data backup

QBD-Specific Features:

- Additional report exporting capabilities
- Industry-specific editions
- More robust inventory management

Integrations

QuickBooks offers a variety of seamless integrations with outside applications that can be quite helpful for managing your business overall. The two versions differ substantially in their featured integration capabilities.

- **QBO** integrates with more than 500 connectors for a simpler integration process that does not require syncing or importing data. This enables businesses to use access and use third-party applications from within the QuickBooks Online platform.
- **QBD** integrates with more than 200 applications. While it is one of the most highly integrated desktop accounting software solutions available, it does not compare to the capabilities of QBO.

Read More: [What Accounting System Is Best For Architecture Firms?](#)

Ease of Use and Support

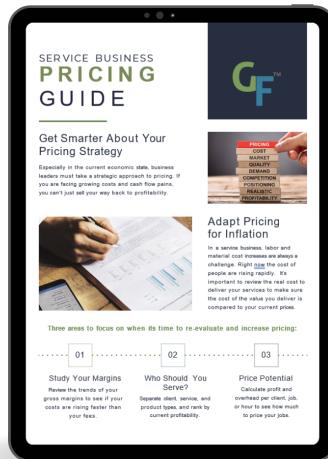
Since it's based in the cloud, QuickBooks Online does not require installation, making it much simpler to use than QuickBooks Desktop which must be downloaded and installed.

Downloading and installing, however, can be completed in a few minutes. QBD becomes slightly more complicated to use if you need it installed and working on multiple desktop computers. You then will need to ensure they all have access to a central network file.

QBO also features an easy-to-use dashboard designed with non-bookkeepers and non-accountants in mind. QBD, on the other hand, was designed more for use by bookkeepers and accountants, making it more challenging for other types of professionals to learn and use.

Customer service and support access are also automatically included with QuickBooks Online, allowing users to contact a representative at any time by phone. These features and services are only available to desktop users who pay an additional \$299.99 annually for a customer care package or shell out for the upgrade to Pro Plus or Premier Plus versions.

Job costing for architecture firms.



[Architecture firms often struggle to price their jobs.](#)

[The Ultimate Pricing Guide \[DOWNLOAD\]](#)

Scalability

As your business grows and its needs expand, you can upgrade to a more robust version of QBO at any time. You can also upgrade to a different version of QBD at any time. QBD upgrades, however, require you to install different software and convert your data from one program to the other. This process can be fairly time-consuming and complex.

Price Points

QuickBooks Online and QuickBooks Desktop offer a variety of price points and plans. The features and capabilities of each vary, so be sure you are aware of what you need and what is included before you select a plan.

QuickBooks Online is by far the more affordable option with the most basic plans starting at just \$10 per month. QBO plans are subscription-based and include:

- **EasyStart** - \$10/month
- **Essentials** - \$20/month
- **Plus** - \$30/month
- **Advanced** - \$100/month

All prices listed above reflect a discount on the first three months of service. After this period, monthly subscription prices will increase.

QuickBooks Desktop versions include:

- **Pro** - \$349.99
- **Premier** - \$549.99
- **Enterprise** - \$1,275.00

QBD is purchased once for download and installation. However, annual updates are recommended for compliance and security purposes.

Challenges and Drawbacks

While QBO and QBD are both solid accounting software solutions, they each have some challenges and drawbacks that should be considered before choosing between the two.

QBO Challenges:

- Limited [reporting](#) capabilities (fewer reports available and charts are not customizable)
- Some reported incidences of invoicing bugs with due date entry
- Limited inventory management capabilities
- Some reported lag with the syncing of credit card transactions

QBD Challenges:

- Some need for manual re-entry between siloed information and departmental systems
- Lacking real-time information
- Additional costs associated with IT management of the physically in-house software

6 QuickBooks Best Practices and Considerations: How to Choose the Software That's Right for Your Architecture Firm

When using [QuickBooks](#), it's wise to implement the following accounting software best practices into your architecture firm's bookkeeping and accounting policies and procedures.

1. Number of Team Members

QuickBooks Online provides easier access for multiple team members with the ability to set up unique login IDs for a fairly large number of individuals (depending on the package you purchase).

2. Scope of Products and Services

While most architecture firms aren't in the business of selling tangible goods (QuickBooks Desktop offers powerful tools for tracing inventory), offering a wide array of different services, as products, can be more complicated to track with QuickBooks Online. If, however, your architecture firm offers a fairly standard list and variety of services/products, then QuickBooks Online should be more than capable of accommodating these categories within its system.

Read More: [What Every Architecture Firm Needs To Know About Accounting](#)

3. Remote Access

QuickBooks Online is the best choice if you want to do more than view your data remotely. If you want to be able to update transactions from outside of your office, then QBO is the best choice for you.

4. Real-Time Data

Additionally, QuickBooks Online provides real-time reports and data, whereas QuickBooks Desktop processes an end-of-day reconciliation and update. As a result, QBO offers more

timely information than QuickBooks Desktop - although, the information available on the desktop version isn't too far behind.

5. Industry-Specific Customizations

QuickBooks Desktop provides an increased number of customizations that are industry-specific, making it simpler to find a version that's perfect for your business right out of the box. QuickBooks Online, however, can be easily customized to accommodate your industry-specific needs. So, if you prefer the features and accessibility of QBO, don't let industry customizations prevent you from selecting this version.

6. In-House or Outsourced Back Office

If your back office runs with a staff that is 100% located in-house, then QuickBooks Desktop should be able to meet your needs relatively easily.

If, however, you are [outsourcing](#) any part of your back office (i.e. working with an outsourced accounting service provider, using a contracted bookkeeper, or hiring a third-party CPA), then QuickBooks Online will make these working relationships much more easy to manage. QuickBooks Online allows you to provide these third-party providers with remote access to your bookkeeping and accounting system and records. As a result, they can generate reports, send invoices, or file your taxes remotely.

Outsourced Back-Office Services and QuickBooks Online

We recommend QuickBooks Online for businesses that outsource any part or all of their back office to a third-party bookkeeping and accounting provider. This enables outsourced providers to function as if they were in the office from a remote location. As a result, the amount of time you need to dedicate to the management of your back office is minimized, freeing you up to focus on higher-value tasks at the core function of your architecture firm.

[1]

<https://6sense.com/tech/small-business-accounting/quickbooks-market-share#:~:text=What%20is%20QuickBooks%20market%20share,small%2Dbusiness%2Daccounting%20category>.