



THE ULTIMATE CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING SUBSCRIPTION BILLING SOFTWARE

quote-to-cash | revenue recognition | cloud accounting | SaaS metrics

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Subscription billing systems are not something you change UNTIL your scale demands it. As your SaaS company grows in size or complexity, you reach a point where manual processes drain your productivity, and you struggle to analyze your growing range of financial and operating data. At this point, you need a system that leverages the latest technology advancements.

At a minimum, a modern billing and accounting system for SaaS, Software, or Technology companies should automate and streamline core financial management functions such as Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, and the financial close. But you can hardly fuel your growth and need for accountability and transparency by simply automating the minimum. SaaS firms, in particular, have revenue recognition, subscription billing, and SaaS and GAAP investor reporting needs that require specialized functionality in their financial management systems.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

To help you evaluate SaaS accounting software solutions and ensure you get the modern features you need in your new system, we've created this SaaS finance buyer's checklist. The checklist includes the 45 must-have features of a modern subscription billing system formatted in a way that makes it easy for you to do a head-to-head comparison of multiple software vendors. Simply use the blank columns for vendor comparison.

Revenue recognition and subscription management

Fast growing SaaS companies need to manage the customer across their lifetime. Understanding the complete revenue stream, across unbilled, billed, and paid; then the revenue recognition across that stream with deferred and recognized revenue, compliant with ASC 606, is critical. Also, handling different billing requirements across user- and/or usage-based subscription billing powers the revenue model. These requirements are best met through a financial system that provides complete contract management, efficient operational processing, timely reporting, and a comprehensive audit trail. Below are the key things you should look for in this system:

Establish Contract-based subscription billing

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Handle multiple pricing methods, such as fixed price, quantity based, usage pricing, discount tiers, overage, included units, and time & materials.

Support different billing approaches, including one-time, in-advance, in-arrears, installments, or multiple invoices.

Integrate via API with home-grown usage tracking systems to pull in statistical accounts for billing.

Integration with payment systems, such as Stripe, to track credit card billing.

Mix multiple billing models in a contract.

Automated billing schedules—monthly, annually, custom, non-linear, or with every invoice—to ensure cash-flow.

Automate renewals to not miss billings and reduce manual work.

Copy existing contracts to speed new creations

Integrate systems for quote to cash

Bi-directional native integration with Salesforce.com with common price book and sharing of collections status, renewal timing.

Integration with Salesforce CPQ for synchronizing contract information with the financial system.

Build end-to-end revenue management

Fully integrated contracts, billing, revenue recognition, and GL.

Automatic alignment of billing and expense amortization.

Separate billing and revenue recognition schedules.

Automatic re-evaluation for additional purchases and changes.

Automatic calculation of multiple element arrangements based on standalone selling prices.

Two sets of books to compare financial results before and after ASC 606.

Create forward-looking forecasting across revenue streams

Track billed, unbilled, and paid invoices across deferred and recognized revenue.

Operating dimensions (e.g., customer, contract, location, etc.) that allow you to quickly get a holistic view of SaaS and revenue measures through statistical tracking and reporting.

Revenue recognition and subscription management (cont'd)

Native General Ledger

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Simplify setup, transactions, and reporting through single, primary GL chart of accounts.

Define, track, and report on every key organizational focus through unique, defined dimensions (e.g., customer, contract, division, region, locations, etc.).

Use the same chart of accounts across multiple entities for quick and easy consolidations and reporting.

Access to over 150 report templates for easy and timely reporting for board members and executive team members.

Automatically schedule reports for timely, proactive analysis of key revenue and expense measures, including budget-to-actuals.

Automated, Flexible Financial Processes

A modern general ledger is more than a standard chart of accounts. It lets you manage, analyze, and present your financial information the way you want, without adding complexity to your chart of accounts or using external reporting tools. Your system should easily let you manage:

Multiple entities

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Drill down into detailed consolidating entries.

Create multiple levels in your organizational hierarchy and various stakeholder structures.

Choose consistent or different workflows, charts of accounts, period definitions, and lists across your multiple entities.

Real-time GAAP, IFRS, FASB, regulatory, and compliance reports with over 150 included templates that give you the capability to drill down to the transaction level.

Multiple ledgers (e.g., AR, AP, order management, and cash management ledgers) that can process transactions independently without degrading GL performance, and reduce the time it takes to close your books and report on financial results and outcome measures.

Multiple books, such as simultaneously keeping books on an accrual and a cash basis, to allow you to easily report business results to multiple stakeholders based on their needs and report preferences.

Utilize spend management to ensure commented expenses are captured in budget/expense comparisons.

Custom workflows and system access, so you can maintain separation of duties, match an accounting workflow to your organization's operational processes, or provide read-only access to stakeholders like executives and auditors.

Financial Insight

A modern accounting system provides in-depth, real-time insight into the organization, allowing you to capitalize on new opportunities or quickly recognize the need for corrective action. You benefit from having a thorough picture of the financial performance of your organization, from high-level summaries down to the underlying transactions. To gain greater financial and operational insight, your system should deliver:

Multiple operating dimensions for all transactions that let you:

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Categorize each transaction by customer, division, contract, location, or more for a “clean GL” in order to avoid creating multiple separate GL accounts for each.



Create reports and dashboards that automatically combine operating dimensions with financial data, so you can analyze results for each operating unit, location, project, product, and more.



Slice and dice your financial and operational data the way you want without having to use external reporting tools or modifying your chart of accounts.



Self-service reports and custom dashboards to reduce ad-hoc stakeholder reporting, while delivering real-time updates and drill down capabilities for visibility and insight into the numbers.



A statistical book of measures, such as churn, CLTV, CMRR, or usage, not captured in a standard ledger, in order to provide greater insight into success metrics directly within your accounting system.



Flexible and configurable reporting tools that allow your finance team to quickly and easily manage changing compliance requirements—like ASC 606.



Spend Management: balance cash inflows and outflows to avoid overspending and ensure budgets are followed.



Cloud Architecture

A modern accounting system is cloud-based, so you can lower IT costs, reduce technology risks, and improve productivity. Using the cloud also gives you the flexibility to choose best-in-class solutions that focus on ease of integration with other leading software solutions to meet your needs in each focus area versus using a suite, which makes external integrations difficult. A best-in-class cloud accounting system delivers:

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On-demand scalability and performance in the cloud, which dramatically reduces your total cost of ownership by decreasing your hardware and software costs as well as your IT time and expense for maintenance, upgrades, and support.



Self-service reports and custom dashboards to reduce ad-hoc stakeholder reporting, while delivering real-time updates and drill down capabilities for visibility and insight into the numbers.



Productivity resulting from anytime, anywhere access on any device and operating system.



Quarterly, automatic software updates that keep you current with the latest accounting standards and software features.



Cloud Architecture (cont'd)

Convenient “point-and-click” integrations that don’t require IT skills with commonly used applications such as:

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→ CRM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Financial planning and analysis tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Home grown usage tracking tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Expense management tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Human resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Inventory and fixed assets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Project and program management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Payment processing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
→ Payroll and ACH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

The Right Company

Be sure to work with an organization that is committed to providing you with a world-class accounting system, not just a suite of software and services that you may not need. Your modern accounting system should come from a company that meets the following criteria:

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Provides a full subscription billing solution from quote/contract to billing to revenue to financials. Proven longevity, sustained growth, and financial strength.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
System and services focused on the software SaaS sector.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Financial and organizational commitment to continued investment and support of the accounting system.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Recognized for excellence by leading industry associations, such as the AICPA.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Top ratings and reviews by customers from trusted third party sources like G2 Crowd and TrustRadius.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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Sage Intacct is the innovation and customer satisfaction leader in cloud financial management. With the powerful combination of Sage and Intacct, the Sage Business Cloud offers the best capabilities of both companies. Bringing cloud computing to finance and accounting, Sage Intacct's innovative and award-winning applications are the preferred financial applications for AICPA Business Solutions.

In use by organizations from startups to public companies, Sage Intacct is designed to improve company performance and make finance more productive. Hundreds of leading CPA firms and Value Added Resellers also offer Sage Intacct to their clients.

The Sage Intacct system includes revenue recognition, subscription billing, contract management, accounting, cash management, purchasing, vendor management, financial consolidation, project accounting, inventory management, and financial reporting applications.

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