ACCOUNTANCY PRACTICE LAUNCH PROGRAMME · CHOOSE YOUR CORE CLOUD ACCOUNTING PLATFORM

Platform decision grid

Score Xero, QuickBooks, FreeAgent and Sage against niche fit, MTD, partner benefits and your certification status.

01 Before you score

The best platform is the one your niche already trusts and you can certify on quickly, not the biggest brand.

What is your niche, and which platform do they already use?

Contractors often expect FreeAgent; general SMEs lean Xero or QuickBooks.

Which one can you get certified on fastest?

Certification is free but takes time. Xero asks you to certify within 30 days of joining.

02 What each column means

Score every platform you shortlist against these four. All prices and discounts are indicative, so confirm them on the partner portal.

Niche fit

Does your target client already use it, or expect it?

MTD readiness

MTD for VAT now, and on HMRC's MTD ITSA compatible list for 2026.

Partner-programme benefits

Free practice instance, client-subscription discounts, support and a directory listing.

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Your certification status

Not started, in progress, or certified.

03 Xero

Broad SME default with a strong app ecosystem. Xero Partner is free and asks you to certify within 30 days.

Niche fit

MTD readiness

Partner-programme benefits

Your certification status

04 QuickBooks

Broad SME default. QuickBooks Online Accountant (ProAdvisor) is free and advertises up to ~60% off client subscriptions when the practice manages billing.

Niche fit

MTD readiness

Partner-programme benefits

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Your certification status

05 FreeAgent

Suits contractors and freelancers, and free to some business bank-account holders. A narrower fit for complex SMEs.

Niche fit

MTD readiness

Partner-programme benefits

Your certification status

06 Sage

Long-established and strong for firms that already know it. Confirm current partner terms on a demo.

Niche fit

MTD readiness

Partner-programme benefits

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Your certification status

07 Your decision

One primary platform, chosen for your niche and how fast you can certify.

Which platform is your primary, and why?

Will you support a second, and only if your niche demands it?

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