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From the Sept. 2007 Review of Payroll Systems

CheckMark Software's Windows and Macintosh compatible payroll system provides support for all state and federal payroll reporting, allowing users to process payroll runs with free direct deposit and support for e-filing of returns, along with print and reporting capabilities that can output associated forms to plain or preformatted paper. The system can handle any number of payer companies, employees and other payees, in up to 99 departments per payer company. Payroll for Windows includes tracking of accruals and multiple deductions, as well as benefit programs such as 401(k) and cafeteria plans. Initial cost for the payroll system is \$249, or it can be bundled with CheckMark's comprehensive accounting system MultiLedger for \$548. Annual renewals of the payroll system, which include periodic rate updates, cost \$125. The system supports Windows Vista.

EASE-OF-USE/DATA ENTRY – 4.5 Stars

CheckMark Payroll opens to a master Commands menu that divides primary functions into three groups — Set Up, Payroll Processing and Reports — with buttons under each for performing specific tasks. A traditional array of pull-down menus is also available across the top, providing access to the same items, along with additional editing, Help and preference options. CheckMark opens into the records of the client company last accessed. To change companies or create a new one, the user first closes out of the current company and then selects the appropriate function from the File menu. The system does not provide a specific client selection center, instead using the Windows file structure, which does not provide filtering or sorting options. When creating a new company,

the program allows the user to copy basic data from an existing one, such as

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the user to move between the various hour types in columns (regular, OT, DT, sick, vacation, etc.) to quickly enter time. A Fill Down button also lets the user instantly make entries for all subsequent employees (if all worked the same hours in a time category, this is useful). Employee time data can also be imported from other systems. The Calculate Pay feature is also handy, providing a quick pseudo payroll run that doesn't actually process it, for showing projected calculated payroll information for all or any number of employees. Access to paycheck processing, printing and modification/reprinting is also simple, and, while the system does not necessarily guide the user through the processes involved in creating and processing payroll runs, it will be very intuitive for users who have knowledge of this process. The vendor's online support center includes a Knowledgebase, a small library of tutorials, hot support issues, and downloadable program and tax table updates, in addition to links to support staff.

FEATURES – 4 Stars

CheckMark Payroll can be used to manage any number of client payer companies with any number of active and inactive employees, allowing up to four pay rates per staff member, along with company default hour categories for regular, OT, sick and other pay multipliers. The program also supports salaried, commissioned, piecework and tipped employees. Any number of voluntary and involuntary deductions can be managed for employees and can be deducted prior to or after assessing federal, state and local tax withholding. Deductions can be variable, fixed value or fixed percentage amounts, and can include cafeteria plans, 401(k)s, union dues, garnishments, charitable allotments, HSA plans or other contributions.

All calculations are automatically performed by the system and are based upon the assigned deductions and the appropriate tax rate data, which the system

can be set to automatically update as necessary. Payroll frequencies can be

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REPORTING CAPABILITIES – 4 Stars

Reporting options are easily accessible from the Command menu, with output grouped into report categories for Employee Information, Employee Earnings, Paychecks, Departments, 941 Taxes, 940 Taxes, State Taxes, Local Withholding, Deductions, Employer Checks and W-2/W-3 Statements. The system can print to plain paper or preformatted stock, and users have the option of previewing reports on-screen prior to printing. PDF output is available if the user has a PDF generator listed in their available printers, and the program can also output to plain text.

INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT – 4 Stars

In addition to tight integration with the MultiLedger Accounting system, CheckMark Payroll can export ledger posting data directly into QuickBooks, Quicken, Peachtree and many other accounting systems. Employee hours can be imported from many time tracking systems.

RELATIVE VALUE – 4 Stars

CheckMark Payroll offers an intuitive system that eases payroll processing for multiple companies and includes several data-entry methods that should meet most needs. The program's primary Command menu is exceptional, providing quick access to all payroll processing, reporting and management functions. The system also offers good two-way import/export functionality from SMB accounting packages. CheckMark Payroll is moderately priced for a lower-end system and has the ability to meet the needs of professional practices that handle the payroll for small to mid-sized client companies. Technical support plans include a pay-as-you go option at \$3 per minute, a basic subscription plan at \$139 per year, and the Priority Support package at \$399. Rate and program updates are

included in the purchase price during that calendar year. Annual program updates

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