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Systems

Payroll CS is offered as part of the Thomson Tax & Accounting CS Professional Suite (formerly Creative Solutions), which offers a comprehensive collection of completely integrated professional accounting software, online applications, electronic document management utilities and secure client collaboration portals. The payroll system can also be used independently of the suite, but with a loss of the benefits that its integration offers.

Payroll CS provides support for all states; any number of active employees; unlimited deductions; multiple pay types, rates and frequencies; benefits and accruals management; reporting compliance; and payment of tax liabilities and third-party funds. An optional direct deposit module is available, as well. Payroll CS also offers remote access capabilities for professionals, as well as online client access functions for entering employee pay data. Employees can also be granted online access to their payroll-related information. Pricing for Payroll CS starts at \$1,500 for management of up to 20 client payrolls.

EASE-OF-USE/DATA ENTRY – 4.5 Stars

The Payroll CS module initially opens into the CS Accounting Suite interface (which was still branded with the Creative Solutions name at the time of this review), a well-designed user-customizable screen that includes mostly text-based links to the suite's primary features and frequently performed tasks.

Through the File pull-down menu, users can open existing clients or create new client companies. The client selection screen includes only name and ID displayed alphabetically, with no search or filtering options. When entering the Payroll module, the screen provides a left-hand menu for tasks including Payroll Check Entry, Check Printing, Employees, reporting options, vendor management, vendor

payments and transmittal letters. The system's traditional pull-down menus

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calendars and selection lists that are automatically populated with GL accounts, banking information, cities and other data. Data-entry screens are customizable, with the ability to add user-defined fields or turn off standard fields depending upon the needs of the company or professional. Payroll data entry is performed one employee at a time, with a spreadsheet view that allows rapid entry of hours, vacation, sick leave and other data, while displaying real-time payroll calculations including payroll withholding items, benefits and deductions. Employee hours can also be imported from many time clock applications and from Microsoft Excel.

FEATURES – 5 Stars

As previously noted, Payroll CS provides tax tables and compliance for federal and all 50 states and allows unlimited companies, departments and employees, with any number of pay rates, types and deductions each. The program also simplifies

management of employees with multiple taxing states, has state-specific minimum wage functions, and includes benefits and accruals management features, including retirement accounts with matching contributions, union dues, child support, garnishments, insurance, flexible spending accounts and an unlimited number of customized deductions per employee.

Payroll CS includes global edit functions that allow changes on an employee record to be transferred to other groups of employees or all for that company. Users can set up "ticklers" in the Status Event feature to alert them of nearing due dates and other tasks that need to be performed. Simple gross-up calculations are provided, along with support for weighted average overtime calculations.

Payroll CS offers e-filing capabilities for forms 940, 941, 944 and many states, along with the ability to make electronic EFTPS payments for federal and many state liabilities, as well as electronic payments of child support, vendors

and other third parties. Magnetic media functions are also included. Employees

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thereby removing the cost delays associated with delivery. Thomson Tax & Accounting also offers a Web Employee module that allows client employees to have online access to payroll information including check stubs, W-2s, W-4s and personal earnings histories.

REPORTING CAPABILITIES – 5 Stars

Reporting options are easily accessible and include nearly 50 standard reports, including earnings, benefits, deductions, check register, payroll journals, departmental summaries, payroll tax summaries, state withholding, SUTA worksheets, deposit reports, new hires, and tip analysis. Report groups can be created on a per-client basis. Payroll CS also includes batch processing functions that allow professionals to prepare forms W-2, 1099, 940, 941, 943, 944, 945 and state payroll tax forms for groups of clients or all clients at one time. The system includes MICR check printing capabilities with support for printing to blank or pre-printed check stock that can be customized using the Check Layout Editor to include client logos and digital signatures. An unlimited number of paychecks can be processed per employee per pay period. The system includes electronic filing and payment options for federal and many states, as well as for child support and third parties.

INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT – 4.5 Stars

Payroll CS can be used as a completely integrated component of the CS Professional Suite of accounting applications, which allows data to flow throughout, including direct posting of transactions to GL accounts, bank reconciliation functions, and integration with UltraTax CS for both client business taxes and their employees' individual returns. Payroll CS users also benefit from integration with the FileCabinet CS paperless document management solution. The program can import time data from leading time clock systems or from Excel spreadsheets and can

export reports to PDF. Data export functionality to other accounting applications

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including NetClient CS portals and Web Employee, which allow clients to input data or print their own checks while granting employees the ability to access prior pay stubs, W-2s and other personal information. Payroll CS can be used as a stand-alone application, but practices already using the CS Professional Suite will realize the greatest benefit from the system through excellent integration of client and employee data. Payroll tax tables are included in the annual cost and renewal costs of the program. Technical support is available through subscriptions.

2007 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

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