"Ugh, Payroll." That's the thought that goes through the minds of many small business owners every pay period, every quarter and then one more time at the end of the year. And for good reason: Payroll can be complex for even small businesses. It requires management of withheld federal, state and local payroll taxes; unemployment insurance; union dues; and voluntary and involuntary deductions like insurance, child support and garnishments. Then come the reporting obligations and payment of these funds to government entities and third parties, and even little mistakes can be costly. According to the IRS, 40 percent of small businesses pay average payroll penalties of $845 per year for late or incorrect filings. Non-penalized mistakes, such as incorrect pay amounts, missing checks and other issues can also cause temporary headaches for employees and, in turn, the business owner having to look into and reprint a check.

It's no wonder that many small business owners have outsourced their payroll responsibilities for years. And with technology making payroll processing, compliance and payment processes more easy to manage, it's also no wonder that professional accounting practices are increasingly adding payroll services back to their client offerings. While many are doing so on a limited basis for just a few clients, many professional firms are going all out, having realized that with the proper technology and workflow processes, payroll can be a key revenue center. Either way, systems on the market allow professional practices to manage as little or as much of the payroll processing tasks as they want, and still own the client relationship. In other words, even if your firm outsources

some or most of your client payroll processes, all client billing and interaction

the need to reprint lost checks and diminishing the time that employees spend at the bank. Newer additions to this feature also allow direct deposit for unbanked employees, with their paycheck funds electronically deposited onto debit cards, which frees them from usurious check cashing fees and decreases the risks they face walking around with too much cash.

The continued movement toward online capabilities has extended to the payroll arena, with programs offered both as online or traditional applications. The most advanced payroll systems even provide secure online portals for employee self-service, allowing them to view prior pay stubs and W-2s, as well as to make requests for time off or notify payroll and HR personnel of changes to their personal information like dependents, address and filing status.

Other features being rapidly embraced are electronic filing and payment of state and federal tax returns, liabilities and workers' compensation funds from within the payroll system. Many programs include due-date management functions
that notify the user of pending tasks and provide prompts to process forms and make payments. More advanced systems have started adding the ability to also make electronic payments to non-government entities, such as child support withholding,
insurance premiums and garnishments. Because of the close relationship between payroll and human resources benefits that are based upon payroll or time worked (like deferred savings accounts, hospital plans and vacation and sick leave accruals), payroll systems also provide varying levels of support for these tasks but with automated workflow processing capabilities that greatly ease these functions.

There is a broad array of payroll processing options available for professional

payroll service provider. The result is client payroll services branded as a service of the accounting firm, with all client contact and billing handled by the practice.

In prior years, we have reviewed professional payroll programs in two review sections, based partly upon on how the software was used as well as on the role that payroll services played in the professional firm. For firms with a strong focus on payroll as a key service offering to most of their clients, we reviewed systems that enabled these firms to work as a payroll service bureau. For professionals to whom payroll is a peripheral function provided to only a few clients, a separate review section explored programs more suited to payroll services on a more limited scale.

This year, we have combined these groups into a singular payroll review resource, with each product rated on several areas of program functionality: Ease of Use/Data Entry, Features, Reporting Capabilities, Integration/Import & Export, and Relative Value. The Relative Value section of each review specifically identifies the type of professional practice most likely to benefit the most from implementation of a specific program. □

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AccountantsWorld — Payroll Relief AC

AccountantsWorld offers a suite of web-based programs for professional accountants, including Payroll Relief AC, Accounting Relief, CyberCabinet, Accountant's Practice Online, After-the-Fact Payroll and Sales Tax Online.

AdaptaSoft, Inc. — CyberPay

CyberPay is a high-end service bureau payroll processing system geared toward professional firms that provide payroll services to large client bases. The highly customizable system offers integration with Microsoft Office for reporting options.

Read Full
Review

AMS Payroll – 1099-Etc A-T-F Payroll

As an add-on option to the 1099-Etc system from Advanced Micro Solutions, the After-the-Fact Payroll (A-T-F) system provides both live and after-the-fact support for processing employee payroll and 1099 compensation.

Read Full
Review

CheckMark Software – CheckMark Payroll for Windows and Macintosh

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.

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Review

CompuPay — PowerPayroll

CompuPay's PowerPayroll is a web-based payroll processing and payroll tax compliance application geared toward use directly by businesses, but with

accountant-oriented interfaces that enable professionals to manage payroll

who provide payroll services .
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Review

CYMA Systems, Inc. – Accounting for Windows Payroll Module

CYMA Systems offers two comprehensive financial accounting systems, one for traditional businesses and one for nonprofit organizations, with GL, AP, AR, sales, purchasing and job costing. CYMA also has a client write-up system for professional accounting practices.
Read Full
Review

Intuit – QuickBooks Enhanced Payroll For Accountants

QuickBooks Enhanced Payroll for Accountants is an add-on module that integrates directly with an accounting firm's version of QuickBooks. Technically, the module is already in QuickBooks, but a subscription to Enhanced Payroll is required to unlock these functions.
Read Full
Review

Mangrove Software — Mangrove Online

Mangrove Software's Mangrove Online is a high-end, extremely comprehensive online payroll and human resources management system that provides variable levels of service...
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Review

PayCycle – PayCycle 2007 for Accounting Professionals

PayCycle's online payroll system provides a completely automated payroll processing and compliance system that can

be used in a variety of ways, either by the client or the professional.

Review

PenSoft — Payroll Plus Accounting Edition

PenSoft offers both industry-specific in-house and service provider-based payroll solutions, including the Payroll Plus Accounting Edition. The Payroll Plus Accounting Edition supports all 50 states in addition to unlimited companies and employees .

Read Full
Review

Red Wing Software – CenterPoint Payroll

Red Wing Software's new CenterPoint Payroll is an impressive addition to the company's line of accounting products for small businesses and franchises, trusts, agricultural concerns and government entities. Built on the .NET platform and utilizing new technologies, the program is fully compatible with the new Vista operating system.

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Review

Sage Software – Abra Payroll

The Abra Payroll program is part of Sage Software's Sage Abra HRMS, a comprehensive human resource management system that includes advanced capabilities for handling corporate payroll, online benefits enrollment, employee education, performance reviews, and online recruiting.

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Review

Sage Payroll Services – Full-Service Payroll

Through its Sage Payroll Services business, Sage

accountants providing service to multiple clients. Through SureChoice for Accountants, professional firms can utilize the online system, including rebranding of client interfaces and support for an unlimited numbers of clients.
[Read Full Review](#)

Thomson Creative Solutions — Payroll CS

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.
[Read Full Review](#)

UBCC — Payroll Service Bureau

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Universal Business Computing Company (UBCC) provides a commercial Payroll Service Bureau program for accountants, along with a collection of professional accounting programs, including client write-up, contractor management and full accounting with GL, AP, AR, bank reconciliation, asset management, job costing, inventory and billing.

[Read Full Review](#)

Technology

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