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offered to clients, the payroll reviews this month will certainly come in handy. And for those already offering these services, it never hurts to see what's available.

Mary Girsch-Bock • Oct. 19, 2015



There are 28 million small businesses in the United States – and they all need to process payroll. While many of those businesses are one-person operations, there's still a tremendous opportunity available to accountants looking to boost revenue streams.

It's not uncommon for small business owners to get tripped up when processing payroll. Payroll is a time consuming process, and many business owner balk when faced with the reality that paying employees is not simply writing a check, but also entails federal, state, and local payroll taxes, unemployment taxes, workers compensation tracking, and now Affordable Care Act requirements that need to be managed. At this point, many business owners become much more amenable to outsourcing their payroll to a reputable accounting firm.

For accounting firms considering adding payroll to their suite of products that are

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- [Cougar Mountain – Denali Payroll](#)
- [Gusto \(formerly ZenPayroll\)](#)
- [Intuit – Intuit Online Payroll for Accountants](#)
- [Paychex – Paychex Flex](#)
- [Real Business Solutions – Payroll Mate](#)
- [Red Wing Software – CenterPoint Payroll](#)
- [SurePayroll – SurePayroll](#)
- [Thomson Reuters – Accounting CS Payroll](#)

For firms not already offering payroll to clients, there are several things that should be considered prior to implementing service and choosing a payroll provider. These include:

- What level of service do you want to provide? Will payroll services be provided in house, or will the entire process be outsourced? Making this decision early in the software purchase process will help narrow down the choices that will better suit your needs.
- System access and security levels will need to be determined as well. Do you want to offer your clients complete access to the payroll process; including time entry and employee level access for payroll stubs and W-2's, or do you want to process payroll in your office and restrict outside access?
- Do you have adequate personnel in the office to handle client payroll processing on top of other services currently offered? While most systems are extremely time effective, and don't require a lot of data entry, there will be additional work that needs to be done. It's good to make sure that the resources are in place prior to starting a new service.
- Do a trial run. Many payroll services are provided on a subscription basis, so you won't find your firm out a lot of money if you do a trial run, and decide that

processing payroll is not right for your firm at this time. That also provides an

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comparable features, while also being suitable for use in businesses as well. For this review, we looked at the following areas:

1. **Basic System Functions** – which includes ease of use, whether the product is designed for accounting professionals, and product scalability.
2. **Reporting and Monitoring** – which looks at options such as the availability of due-date tracking or system reminders, tax filing options available, as well as the ability to customize system reports.
3. **Integration/Import/Export** – takes a look at how well the product integrates with modules from the same vendor, as well as third-party applications. This area also addresses the availability of Time Clock import, as well as what data import/export formats are available.
4. **Help/Support** – one of the most important areas, and frequently overlooked by those in the market for software, we look at the availability of telephone and email support, user tools such as wizards, interactive help functionality, and whether an account rep is assigned to your firm.
5. **Client Self Service Features** – important for those looking to outsource payroll completely, this area looks at the availability of client and employee portals, and whether the option to brand the resultant product with a firm logo is available.
6. **Advanced Features** – this area looks at features such as the ability to handle union or certified payrolls and the availability of HR tools.

Whether you're looking for an in-house payroll system, or a web-based product, the products here are a great place to start, with many offering free trials or demos to try out.

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