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SurePayroll — SurePayroll

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SurePayroll offers its self-branded service both directly to small businesses and as an outsourced payroll option for accountants wishing to provide payroll services to their clients. For professional accountants, SurePayroll offers a wholesale option through which the service is discounted and can be branded with the accounting firm's name, helping to maintain the client-accountant relationship. Pricing is dependent upon number of clients and their number of employees. Through the accountant's discount, which is 10 percent, a single company with 20 employees paying semi-monthly would cost \$57.56 per payroll. For an accounting firm with 50 such companies, similar to the prototype firm defined in the introduction to this review section (page 20), this would result in monthly pass-through fees of about \$5,756, on top of which the firm would charge their mark-up. SurePayroll handles all tax filings and deposits, and the pricing includes direct deposit access to reports and payroll history.

LEARNING CURVE – 5 Stars

SurePayroll is a completely web-based system, where the authorized user accesses the payroll data interface through a secure server through either SurePayroll's web site or that of the accounting firm. Clients can be set up so that only a member of the accounting firm can enter data and access reporting tools, or in a manner that lets the client enter data. In the latter case, having the web interface branded with the

firm's name and accessed through the firm's web site can provide the appearance that the service is handled in-house.

The online interface is easy to use, with intuitive screens that help guide the user through the data-entry process. The primary window uses tabs to allow users to access the Account Center, Payroll functions, Reports, Employees and Company information areas. The Account Center provides a basic overview of pending tasks for a specific company, such as checks that need to be printed, as well as easy access to reports, running payroll and adding or editing employee data. The initial setup of a company is guided by SurePayroll's SureStart system.

Being a web-based program helps make it easier to use and more convenient, according to Mike Winters, CPA, senior staff accountant with the Pennsylvania firm of Neve and Company, PC (www.NeveandCo.com). "If I am not in the office and operating remotely, I can still log in and enter data for a client should they need it," he said. "I don't need to be near the office; I only need to be near a computer with the Internet." The practice also has many of its clients enter raw time and employee data themselves, which he says enables the firm to spend less time on less-productive tasks like data entry. "They can access the program from their office and enter the data just as easily as they can send it to us by fax, so it just makes sense."

FEATURES & SERVICES – 4.5 Stars

As an online service, one of the key benefits is the ability to enter data and review reports from any location, even when far away from the office. After setting up company and employee rules and defaults, the system automatically tracks and calculates vacation and sick time, as well as other benefit information. SurePayroll calculates payroll immediately, allowing the user to review and approve the information within minutes of entering the raw data. Payroll lead times are as little as two hours, and no Direct Deposit pre-note is required. SurePayroll customers have the option of using 57 deduction codes and 21 earnings codes, and they can rename/customize any of them. The system also allows 10 one-time miscellaneous deductions to be applied per pay period. Payroll can also be distributed to multiple departments by percentage.

Prior to running and approving payrolls, they can be previewed to ensure accuracy. Additionally, e-mail notices called SureReminders can be set to automatically go to clients or whomever is responsible for data entry for a client, reminding them to enter data for a pay period. Employees can also be sent payday e-mails that allow them to view and print their online pay stubs. Direct Deposit, e-

filing of federal, state and local tax returns and e-payment of tax liabilities are all included in the base price of the system, and the company assumes responsibility for tax penalties if payments are not made on time as a result of their actions.

REPORTING CAPABILITIES – 4.5 Stars

SurePayroll offers a limited stock of standard reports for payroll, such as department summaries, department details and compliance reports. It also offers electronic employee pay stubs, and benefits tracking reports for 401(k) and tracking sick/vacation hour accruals. The system provides a W-2 preview function that lets clients view employee W-2s prior to printing and submission. In addition to printing W-2s, it also prints W-3s, 940s and State annual tax forms. A W-2 add-on service is available through which SurePayroll will process, file and mail all W-2s for \$36 per company and \$3.60 per employee.

SurePayroll offers free direct deposit and the option for customers to print their own paychecks in-house free. The company also offers a check printing and delivery service for a fee.

INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT – 4 Stars

SurePayroll can export GL data directly into QuickBooks and MYOB, but no other program integration is offered. The system provides *.PDF formatting of reports and even checks, allowing for simplified paperless management of payroll. Through partnership with a third party, the company also offers worker's compensation management.

TRAINING & SUPPORT – 4 Stars

The system includes a built-in help utility, but little online assistance. Technical assistance is provided in the subscription price. The company does not provide formal training sessions. Through the custom payroll accountant wholesale version of the program, SurePayroll creates a customized web interface that users can log into from the accounting firm's web site. This interface is branded with the firm name, with no mention of outsourcing. Mr. Winters noted that the few times he has needed live support, the company was "very helpful and responsive."

SUMMARY

SurePayroll has embraced the concept of the paperless office, including unlimited Direct Deposit, providing electronic pay notices and stubs to client employees, and offering *.PDF formatted versions of all of its reports. The system offers a decent overall feature set for firms wishing to outsource their payroll processing and the compliance issues that go along with it. And it also allows the accountant to

maintain “ownership” of the client relationship by keeping their firm brand in the client’s eye.

2005 Overall Rating – 4.5 Stars

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