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2008 Review of Professional Payroll Systems

ADP, which has been a long-time provider of payroll services directly to small businesses, recently introduced RUN powered by ADP, Payroll for Accountants, an online payroll management system specifically designed for professionals providing payroll services to multiple clients. The system supports all states, provides full direct deposit capabilities and offers GL export to all major accounting systems. Since it is online, firms also have the ability to offer the perk of Web access to employers and their employees through a firm-branded website. ADP also offers an optional tax filing service through which the vendor automatically prepares and submits forms and liability payments. A 7-pay, biweekly payroll with tax filing and full service direct deposit would range between \$50 to \$75 based on the number of clients the accountant processed with ADP and if the accountant or client printed the checks on site. All billing is directed through the accounting practice.

DATA ENTRY & KEY FEATURES – 4.5 Stars

The RUN system is accessed through a web browser, with a single log-in providing access to the primary console, the Accountant Dashboard, which offers the master client selection list, a spreadsheet view that includes a variety of search and filter functions and displays messages, client status, contact data and other information. This initial interface is firm centric, providing access to firm-wide functions such as adding clients, billing, security settings and editing of the client access screens to include firm logo and information.

Selection of a client brings up the Payroll Home for that company, with the window offering a workflow diagram of payroll processes, along with panels that display Messages and Tasks, while a menu gives access to processing functions, printing, creation of direct deposit and GL files, and other payroll tasks.

The system offers alerts and reminders for key tasks and filing deadlines. Tabs

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historical checks and other related information. Data-entry screens provide selection lists, calendars and other tools. Tax rates are automatically maintained by ADP, so when entering or editing employee information, appropriate taxes are applied depending upon worker status and location. Payroll groups can be scheduled weekly, biweekly, semi-monthly, monthly or quarterly, and can include hourly, salaried and contract workers, including payroll management of employees who receive tips, commissions and bonuses. Worker pay can be assigned to multiple departments, and up to three standard pay rates can be assigned to each worker, in addition to automatically computed overtime, double overtime, holiday pay and other factors.

Once employees and company settings for rates, accruals and other information are set up, a payroll run can be processed in as little as two steps. Salaried employee base pay is already populated, and users can have the program automatically assign anticipated hours for full-time hourly workers (subject to review) while all calculations for deductions and payroll taxes are automatically calculated and posted. For most routine payroll runs, this would leave incidental data input, such as manually changing hours, entering vacation time used or overriding an employee's pay rate or deductions for the payroll.

Professionals can choose from more than one hundred standard earnings and pre- and post-tax deductions that can be applied to each employee, including benefit plans, insurance, union dues, garnishments and other payments. Paychecks can be printed at the accounting firm, transmitted to the client for printing on-site, or printed by ADP and delivered. Professionals can preview payrolls prior to processing and can calculate payroll gross-to-net. If printed at the professional practice, all client payrolls can be printed together or individually. Direct

deposit supports multiple bank accounts and split deposit/check payments. Also

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INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT – 4 Stars

RUN includes a GL export function to QuickBooks that simplifies the exporting of all payroll journal entries into that accounting system or into a format importable by most accounting systems. The reporting features export to Excel for formatting, editing or additional analysis.

RELATIVE VALUE – 4.5 Stars

RUN provides professionals with multiple options for providing payroll services to clients, from allowing some client access and data entry to full service by the firm to variable check printing locations. Since it is web-based, it can be used anywhere and frees the firm from software and tax rate updates, and also extends online features to the client and their employees. The entire process remains in the firm's control, including website branding elements and billing. Ironically, the system is perhaps best suited to firms trying to take back payroll from clients using payroll service providers like ADP, as well as other generally smaller businesses.

2008 Overall Rating: 4 Stars

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