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W-2, W-3, 940, 941, 943 and 1096.

Dec. 01, 2008

After-the-Fact (AFP) Payroll from AccountantsWorld provides a W-2/1099 preparation module for information return filing. As a stand-alone program or as part of the Accountants Office Suite, AFP Payroll supports forms 1099-MISC, 1099-R, 1099-B, 1099-DIV, 1099-INT, 1099-S, 1098, W-2, W-3, 940, 941, 943 and 1096.

The program can be used to file print copies of returns or can produce magnetic media files, and supports e-filing of 1099s. AFP Payroll costs \$195 for the federal version and offers full compliance for filing with CA, CT, FL, GA, IL, MA, MI, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, TX and VA, for an additional \$125 per state. It also generates state reports for all other states.

Usability/Navigation – 4.5 Stars

As a payroll program, AFP Payroll provides a payroll register. But it also seamlessly shares this data with the form preparation tools, which can greatly speed the preparation process if the user is already using the payroll application. The system opens to a user-friendly work area with intuitive traditional icons and pull-down menus for the primary functions of the program. Users have two choices for data entry: either entering information onto form replicas or using a non-form-based method. The system uses easy-to-understand color coding to note various fields, with active fields highlighted and movement navigation between fields possible using either the Tab or Enter keys. AFP automatically calculates FICA withholding for W-2s. After setting up a client, data entry is geared more toward the payroll application, with data for employees entered in different steps. Basic recipient/employee information is entered first, followed by financial data such as wages, payments and withholding. Necessary data transfers automatically to summary

forms. Right-click menus and other advanced Windows functions aid in the usability

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Reporting & Import/Export Capabilities – 4.5 Stars

AFP integrates with other AccountantsWorld programs and can directly import payroll data from Accountant's Relief Plus. The program can also import data from spreadsheet and database files that are in ASCII format. Most accounting programs can export into this format, so importing existing client and employee data should be a fairly simple two-step process. Within the program, payroll information transfers to a report generator that can produce summary reports for unemployment, vendor data and employee earnings per client, as well as a complete payroll register and state reports. Payroll reports are exportable into spreadsheets and meet the requirements of the state reporting agencies supported by the program (listed above). The system can be used with any Windows-based printer and also offers the ability to print mailing labels for employees and recipients.

Support for Paperless Transmission- 4.5 Stars

AFP Payroll can be used to file W-2s and 1099s magnetically or electronically to the appropriate agency, as well as print-based filing.

Help/Training – 4.5 Stars

The program offers a good, index-based help utility as well as additional features such as right-click menus that give shortcuts to primary features. It includes *.PDF versions of IRS instructions and a user's manual, as well as an Internet help center on the company's web site. AccountantsWorld also offers e-mail and phone-based support at no additional cost. The program can be set to automatically update itself, which will be of more use to year-round users of the payroll system and when preparing quarterly reports.

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For this review section, we scored the reviewed products on the following:

Usability/Navigation, which covers ease-of-use; number of clients and form recipients; primary navigation tools; and general operation of the program, including data entry.

Reporting & Import/Export Capabilities focuses on managerial tasks, printing functions and data transfer between the program and spreadsheets and other applications such as payroll and AP modules.

Support for Paperless Transmission. With increasing state and federal requirements for magnetic or electronic transmission of W-2s and 1099s, as well as the cost and timesaving benefits of minimizing printing, we considered the capabilities of these programs to perform paperless transmission of year-end returns.

Help/Training looks at built-in help utilities such as right-click menus and tutorials, external help tools such as online support centers and functionality, as well as productivity tools and training options.

Relative Value provides the reviewer's subjective opinion of what the user gets for the price. There is some variance in the pricing of the programs in this review, but it is not very wide. Value, of course, is not exclusively related to cost. However, sometimes the best deal is not the cheapest, and sometimes the most expensive option does not provide the best function.

The **Overall Rating** represents a comprehensive view of how a product scored in the above

categories, and is the average of

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