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Review of Service Bureau Style Payroll — 2006

The Payroll Pool: Come On In, The Water's Fine!

Dec. 01, 2008

Well, 6/6/2006 passed, and I didn't notice much go awry. That wasn't the case for me a few days earlier on June 3. Waking that morning, I went to my computer to check my e-mail. Well, something went wrong in the middle of the night — we lost power or whatever, and my machine had rebooted at some point during the night. My computer (heaven forbid anyone should touch it, save Dad) is the server within our family's three-computer DSL-enabled network. Shaking my head, knowing I had to deal with this now before that first cup, I proceeded to enter my password, hit and waited for files, desktop icons, etc., to reload so that I could resume using my computer.

As soon as things loaded, I could see what had happened. During the night, my Internet security software had downloaded a system update and attempted to install it. During the install process something went bump, and Windows/XP took it on the lam, shutting down.

So at this point, my screen was full of messages.

Windows/XP was telling me that critical system updates needed to be downloaded and installed, some type of Java update needed to be downloaded and, since my system had rebooted after a crash, I had a desktop message from Microsoft asking whether I wanted to report "my problem" to Microsoft. Sheesh! I just woke up. Leave me alone!

Okay, enough of this. You all have computers at home, too! My point is that my responsibility for upkeep of our home computer network was an interruption that I could have done without this particular morning. My time could have been better spent elsewhere, certainly towards a more productive end.

How nice it would be if someone else could handle this problem for me? In fact, how nice it would be if this could be entirely avoided in the future.

Why should maintenance of home computers be any different than mowing the lawn?

The solution should only be a matter of finding a service that would fit our pocketbooks, right? Then, I began to think about how much better it would be if we could just simply get a remote high-speed hookup to a hosted computer desktop. Yeah, now we're cooking. Nothing would ever be written to MY hard drive, I wouldn't ever worry about viruses, and no one could ever scan the back-end of my home computer with a bent for breaking in and sending malicious e-mails. Even better, all operating system and system utility updates would be loaded by somebody else! Not my problem! Subscribe to the service, set it up for auto-pay with a credit card, and now it's NO LONGER MY JOB!

I'm a CPA in public practice, and payroll processing doesn't present a problem or major hurdle for me. Yet, I recognize that for many it is a boring, repetitive process — one that could be performed by someone else. I have this theory about payroll processing. I believe that payroll processing in any form, whether it's the delivery of payroll services to 800 businesses by a payroll service bureau or a local accounting firm serving 10 to 15 small business clients, is just like mowing lawns. We all know that payroll is not going to go away. In fact, many accountants have discovered that the provision of payroll services aids in recession-proofing their accounting practices.

We also know that everyone is not suited to the task. Many of us, clients and accountants alike, would be better suited if someone else assumed responsibility for some or all payroll tasks — writing payroll checks; making tax deposits; and taking care of monthly, quarterly and annual tax reports. The solution: turnkey enhanced payroll applications, hosted applications, and outsourcing of payroll tasks. The enhanced solution: Allow customization of outsourcing to assume payroll tasks in support of individual client needs. Many accountants in public practice hear the words service bureau and immediately think that someone has uttered a four-letter word — somehow the subject has changed to a discussion of SIZE. It ain't so.

While I agree that a quality service bureau application should be scalable, the words service bureau should really stand for much more. Service bureau applications

should stand for the following: the ability to deliver enhanced payroll routines such as direct deposit (or loading take-home-pay to debit cards for non-banked employees); multiple company support; creation of ACH files for payroll deposits; impounding of client funds and YOUR accounting fees; online portals that support remote data entry by clients and/or accounting staff; customized reporting; support of unlimited number of employees, locations, payroll codes-earnings-deductions; enabling client employees to access their historical payroll through secure online portals; real-time on-demand processing and so much more.

Many accountants who provide payroll services have discovered that the provision of payroll services leads to increased client work and greatly assists in attracting new business.

This review includes a strong cast of service bureau payroll applications from companies desiring to form successful, working partnerships with you, the practicing accountant. These products are geared to accountants with a large payroll client base (50 or more).

I almost forgot to mention that I went to the lawn and garden store yesterday. They had the most wonderful, high-tech Tanaka walk-behind edger. It was to die for! Now, let's go mow some lawns! ☐

[AccountantsWorld — Payroll](#)

[Relief AC](#)

Payroll Relief AC is a web-based, online product available through AccountantsWorld Online, allowing for practitioner and client access. Client access is determined and controlled by the practitioner, allowing the accountant to determine the level of access and what role the client will play in data entry.

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[AdaptaSoft, Inc. — CyberPay](#)

CyberPay provides service bureau-style payroll directed to accountants and other providers of payroll services. CyberPay provides industrial-strength payroll and supports an unlimited number of client companies, departments and employees.

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[ADP — EasyPayNet](#)

ADP is a longtime, well-known provider of outsourced payroll services. EasyPayNet was conceived as an online service to serve small businesses. It is available to accountants as a wholesale service or can be purchased by small businesses directly.

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[CompuPay, Inc. \(formerly PayMaxx\)](#)

[— PowerPayroll](#)

PowerPayroll is a comprehensive, scalable online payroll system from CompuPay that supports payroll and tax compliance across all 50 states. PowerPayroll is designed for use by small and midsize businesses. Specifically, it is directed to companies with fewer than 150 employees or the large company with multiple small work sites.

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[Execupay — Execupay Payroll](#)

The Execupay Payroll Suite (EPS) can trace itself to the operation of a service bureau — a service that is still operating today. EPS is a comprehensive suite of modules that supports the outsourced payroll model we have come to know as the “21st Century Service Bureau.”

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[Intuit — Complete Payroll](#)

Complete Payroll by Intuit is a flexible outsourced payroll application that supports the client’s payroll entry method of choice. Payroll data may be entered into Complete Payroll via direct

input on the web, via the user's in-house computer (Internet access required), or via a telephone call to Intuit.

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[Mangrove Software — Mangrove](#)

[Online](#)

Founded in 1994, Mangrove Software is a leader in delivering web-based payroll, human resource (HR) and employee self-service solutions. Headquartered in Tampa, Florida, Mangrove supports payroll service bureaus, administrative service organizations (ASOs), hotels, manufacturers, healthcare organizations and retailers.

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[PenSoft — PenSoft Payroll](#)

[Plus](#)

PenSoft Payroll Plus is a comprehensive PC-based payroll application available in several editions: Accounting (Service Bureau), Platinum, Enterprise, Professional, Standard and Lite. The Accounting Edition is reviewed here. PenSoft's Payroll Plus Accounting Edition supports multiple client companies with fast operation in support of payroll data entry, payroll calculation, payroll checkwriting, invoicing, enhanced reporting, and human resources information.

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[Sage Software — Sage Payroll](#)

[Services](#)

Sage Software introduced Sage Payroll Services to the payroll marketplace in April 2004, but Sage Software has been in the payroll business for more than 20 years. Sage Payroll Services is an outsourced payroll offering for small to midsize businesses and organizations. Accountants can opt to partner with Sage either through the Sage Software Accountants Network and/or through the Sage Certified Business Partner Program.

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Sage Software/Sage Compliance

Services — Sage EDP Payroll Tax

Sage Software's Sage Compliance Services

(formerly known as FLS tax compliance services) offers Sage EDP Payroll Tax, a comprehensive and easy-to-use payroll tax compliance solution. Sage Compliance Services is a recognized leader in delivery of payroll tax compliance services.

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Stellar Software — Payroll

Café

Payroll Café from Stellar Software is a comprehensive, full-featured payroll system that has been developed to serve payroll professionals acting as payroll service bureaus. The product offers payroll processing for an unlimited number of client companies, including support for processing in all 50 states. Examples of the enhanced payroll abilities of Payroll Café include MICR encoding, magnetic media support, creation of ICESA formatted files (for use with the Quickfile Unemployment Tax Reporting Program), and direct deposit.

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SurePayroll — SureChoice

For Accountants

SurePayroll is a comprehensive, full-featured, 100 percent online outsourced service bureau payroll product. SurePayroll automates the payroll process, eliminating many traditional processing steps that conventional payroll services require. Using SurePayroll, small businesses and their employees can access information and process payrolls from anywhere, on-demand.

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Thomson Creative Solutions —

Payroll CS

Payroll CS, previously known to many as Payroll Solution, is a comprehensive, full-featured in-house payroll application. Thomson Creative Solutions (CS) produces a wide range of software and

online applications directed to use by accountants. CS offerings include write-up, tax planning and compliance, asset management, practice management and website building for accounting firms. Payroll CS integrates with other CS applications.

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[Review of Service Bureau Style](#)

[Payroll Systems 2006 — Executive Summary](#)

“Make my day!” Actually, that statement is incomplete. What I meant to say was, “Make my day EASIER!” Service bureau payroll accounting applications truly offer unparalleled processing abilities for the payroll professional. Service bureau payroll applications are in the midst of a rapidly evolving and developing software environment — one that offers increased efficiencies and related productivity, as well as new tools that deliver improved client services.

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