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Tax legislation over the past couple of years has affected a wide range of tax types and payroll tax has been no exception. Legislation put into effect in January 2012 continued that trend and debates will certainly start taking place as we head into 2013. Payroll tax affects an overwhelming majority of the workers in the United States and the current tax uncertainties remain a huge issue.

Tax and accounting professionals are well positioned to provide the adequate planning, guidance and compliance necessary for all the current and potential changes. The payroll software reviewed in this section will help provide tax and accounting professionals the tools required during this time of uncertainty.

For the current year payroll compliance reviews, we have scaled back the number of

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A variety of payroll processing methods are available and allow tax and accounting professionals to choose the one best suited to complement their respective service offerings. These various methods also allow the accountant to assume different levels of responsibility for the payroll, from end-to-end processing to quarterly compliance overview only. This additional layer may also encourage collaboration with the client on a variety of payroll related issues.

Commonly requested features, such as time keeping functions and direct deposit are present in nearly all products. Each payroll solution is also highly automated to reduce error rates and time spent processing payroll. One area of strength within each respective payroll solution is the amount of help and support included.

Due to recent changes in payroll legislation, tax and accounting professionals are leaned on for guidance. While most accounting professionals have a knowledgebase capable of handling all aspects of payroll, many may not have the requisite time or dedicated staff resources to perform the necessary research.

The help and support systems in place generally offer strong assistance features to ease the issues and burdens that come up with payroll compliance. Moreover, each vendor commonly includes these help and support offerings with the annual licensing costs.

Payroll vendors have been quick to adapt to the changing consumer market and many are offering next generation services to clients and sometimes employees. Nearly all vendors provide some level of employee self-service portal which helps reduce the administrative burden of providing paper copies of paystubs to employees.

These portals, however, are viewed differently by each payroll vendor and functionality differs accordingly. With the overwhelming presence of mobile devices

today, payroll vendors are also in the process of implementing mobile applications.

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into their payroll solutions and those that do tend to treat after-the fact payroll as an extension as opposed to a dedicated module.

This greatly decreases the features usefulness in most instances. Human resource functions are not generally included for solutions designed for the desktop while Internet-based solutions tend to include rudimentary capabilities with available add-ons for full featured HR management. A final difference in the payroll solutions is integration capabilities.

All the solutions will import some level of data through Microsoft Excel and CSV file formats. Payroll solutions that are not part of a suite of products are usually limited to a fixed number of products for integration.

With the next generation service offerings being improved upon and the help and support options provided, tax and accounting professionals have the opportunity to be well positioned in the payroll service area. Payroll solutions available today can aid in creating new revenue streams and profitability for tax and accounting professionals.

Accountants offering payroll services are also in a position to gain additional work through frequently interacting with current clients' most valuable assets, their employees.

Payroll

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