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888-400-1613

www.ParamountSoftware.com

From the October 2012 [review of professional payroll systems](#).

Best Fit: Firms seeking an automated payroll preparation and compliance system that can support any number of businesses, provides client-side and employee self-service tools, free direct deposit, and quarterly/annual reporting handled and guaranteed by the vendor at no extra cost and with no impounding.

Strengths

- Fully web-based
- Can integrate with firm website with firm branding
- Custom batch reporting
- Wholesale payroll options
- All-inclusive pricing, no add-on charges
- Full HR module
- Automated, guaranteed reporting
- Supports multi-state employees

Potential Limitations

- Online support options could be more plentiful

While Crest Payroll is still a lesser known brand in the market, its professional payroll solution is an example of a company listening to the needs of professionals and developing a system that provides excellent usability, streamlined workflow features, automated processing and exceptional ease-of-use.

The totally web-based system, recently redeveloped on the .NET platform, provides

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The completely web-based Crest Payroll was designed specifically for accounting firms that manage payrolls and compliance for multiple employers. The system includes interfaces for firm users, their client's business managers and even client employees, with each having access to only the functions and data that the accounting firm has decided they can access.

While some firms may wish to let some clients access nothing or only final reporting, some clients may be given the ability to directly enter time and employee data. Likewise, if granted access, client employees can be given online access to view paystubs, W-2s, W-4s and make vacation requests. The firm remains in control of what any user can see, and the website interface the clients and employees use can be branded to reflect only the name of the firm, including the website address.

For payroll staff at a practice, users log in through a secure interface that works on any major browser. Initial setup of firm, client and employee data is very easy, thanks to wizards and guides that assist in selecting default deduction categories and types, pay types and rates, pay frequencies, and other defaults, or to create custom types of each. Users can create any number of these, including those with third-party recipients for garnishments, insurance, retirement plans cafeteria plans, transportation allowances, child care and literally anything else.

The redesigned interface offers a customizable dashboard with quick links and access to key metrics, an inbox that displays reminders of payroll activity, a calendar, links to various calculators and payroll information resources, and recent news items. The main menu offers access to additional dashboard functions, client management functions, employee management, payroll processing, compliance functions, reporting, tools HR tools and the built-in workers' comp utility.

Client management screens are exceptionally well designed, providing spreadsheet

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multiple locations, any number of employees per employer, and can be used by any number of firm staff, all at a single prices with no additional fees for any functions or modules.

Each client company can have multiple payroll frequencies for employee types or groups, such as weekly, bi-weekly, semi-monthly, monthly, quarterly, etc.

Once client employers and employees are set up, the payroll processing functions are almost hands free, since the program can automatically prepare payrolls based on defaults. The user simply starts the run, reviews it for accuracy, receives a payroll report to verify funds are available in the required accounts, then finalizes the payroll run.

Any necessary adjustments to hourly employee's time worked, or changes to deductions or other factors, are easily performed. Employee data can also be imported directly from Excel and CSV formats.

Another new feature in Crest is the ability to use different client bank accounts for payrolls, payroll compliance and even the fees the client pays the accounting firm for providing payroll services. Paramount Software, the U.S.-based makers of Crest, have CPAs and payroll professionals on staff who process, manage payment of, and submit all payroll taxes and reporting to all federal, state and local jurisdictions, including new hire reporting.

There is no impounding, and the funds go directly from the client or firm account to the taxing entities. This service is guaranteed and provided at no additional charge, and the firm can track acknowledgements through the system.

Crest Payroll's human resources (HR) management functions are unmatched among the systems reviewed this year, providing full tracking of client employee benefits, from vacation accruals management and insurance plans, to workers' comp and

retirement plans. It offers compliance with E-Verify requirements, with tracking of

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employees can access online.

Reporting & Monitoring: 5 Stars

Among the newly added features, one of the most impressive is the dashboard feature that appears on the user's homepage. It includes a calendar that shows tasks for the month, as well as alerts and messages regarding payroll or client activities that need to be addressed. It also has news from the IRS and other sources, and customizable Quick Links that users can set to take them to the most functions they use most.

The Key Metrics section of the dashboard shows charts and graphs that give the firm insight into client status, client locations, employee counts and pay frequencies, allowing them to quickly see which clients are most valuable, the profitability of services by months, and breakdowns of other client data, including active versus non-active clients.

Payroll reports are available immediately after finalizing runs, and EFT notices are accessible as soon as payments are processed. All compliance reporting, from new hires and quarterly and annual reports, to W-2s and 1099s, are managed and processed by Paramount Software at no additional cost. Reporting is also offered for MIS and HR, and can be batch processed for all or selected clients. Direct Deposit is free and professionals also have the option of printing checks with digital signatures at the firm, or giving clients the ability to print them at their own location.

Client billing can be managed directly from within the program, with invoices sent by email (or printable) and with electronic payment capabilities. All reports, invoices and client letters offer exceptional customization options with drag and drop functions that let users select any data and present it in any way.

Integration/Import & Export: 4.75 Stars

In addition to the ability to import client employee time data directly from Excel and

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instructions for each data entry screen, as well as explaining what each field is for. This makes it easy to get new administrative staff up to speed. The company's support website provides FAQs and videos, along with live web-based chat and email contacts, while live phone-based support is included in pricing.

Since it is a web-based program, all system updates, including all state and federal employment tax rates, are automatically maintained by Paramount Software, with no IT requirements needed by firms. The program works on all modern browsers.

Client Self-Service Features: 5 Stars

Crest Payroll offers client-side access to the payroll system, with the payroll service/accounting firm having control over specifically what any user at the client business can access. This can range from zero access, to allowing them to view reports, to giving them the ability to enter employee time and other information and even print payroll checks at their own business. If the firm and client employer want, they can also offer employee access to things such as viewing pay stubs, their YTD information, W-2s, 1099s, make W-4 changes, and request PTO or other HR functions.

For both the client and employee views of the program, it can be completely branded with the accounting firm's logo, color scheme and other features, with no reference to Crest Payroll or Paramount. The system can even have a website address that is a part of the firm's, such as www.payroll.YourFirmWebsite.com. Firms can also add a login on their homepage that can take a client directly to their payroll view.

Summary & Pricing

With the latest update and redesign of Crest Payroll, it has remained very user friendly but is among the most comprehensive payroll solutions for professionals managing any number of clients of any size. It includes full compliance reporting at

the federal, state and local levels that is performed and guaranteed by the vendor at

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and the HR tools.

2012 Overall Rating: 5 Stars

Payroll

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