CPA
Practice Advisor

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most of the data-entry functions related to payroll processing, but the backend calculations, compliance, payments and other services are often managed by the payroll vendor, but with no direct client contact by the vendor.

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

As a web-based system that is hosted on the AccountantsWorld secure servers, Payroll Relief is accessed through the user's browser, and can be setup to link from the firm's website or the firm's Accountants Office Online portal (a service offered by the vendor). As a program designed for accounting practices, this site can then act as the firm's intranet, offering staff access to all professional programs. Likewise, payroll clients can access a customized online interface from the firm's website, giving them access to only those features and areas of the program that the firm has chosen to make available. The program can support any number of concurrent users, and is ideally suited to small and mid size practices with up to five people dedicated to payroll processing. For data consistency, the system doesn't allow specific client data entry by multiple users at the same time. Various pricing methods are offered, including an unlimited first-year plan, per-paycheck and per-payroll options (see below for pricing). Direct deposit (including support for multiple employee bank accounts) is included in pricing.

The screens and menu structures are very intuitive, providing drop-down menus for core system functions, including employer/client management, employees, contractors, e-services, payroll processing, compliance, reporting, integration and resources. Data-entry functions performed by firm staff members take place on comfortably designed workspaces that include a multi-employee screen view for quickly entering or editing hours and accruals or assigning cost centers or departments. A main client selection screen offers a brief overview of client activity, while the Payroll Management Center acts as a command center for all client payroll

activities. Dashboards are available for individual clients, showing pay schedules,

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selected clients. The system offers several automated features that streamline payday data entry and allow multi-employee views for entering data or editing employee default information for time and accruals. Payroll Relief includes basic benefits management capabilities, including any number of pre- and post-tax deductions per employee, as well as management of third-party payments, workers' compensation and retirement plans. 4.25

REPORTING & MONITORING

The Payroll Management Center offers an overview of payroll run dates and provides links to compliance reporting due dates, with the system automatically scheduling quarterly and annual reporting and payments to federal agencies and most states after payroll runs are processed. Printable signature-ready forms are also available for all jurisdictions. Liabilities can be funded incrementally with each payroll run or transferred in-whole as due dates near. Payroll Relief's reporting functions include all compliance forms, as well as customizable management report options that can be exported to Excel and Word. This includes payroll registers, comparisons, tax analysis and deposit liability reports, as well as deductions and workers' comp, with a pay-as-you-go option. The program's dashboards are focused on overall client entity activity, but employee-centric data-entry screens do offer some additional drilldown functionality. 4.25

INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT

AccountantsWorld offers a suite of professional accounting applications, and Payroll Relief offers direct integration with the vendor's write-up and document management systems. The program also offers Excel-formatted GL output for import into external accounting programs and can import data from Excel and from most time clock systems. If the firm allows, clients can also be given the ability to login to a secure portal and enter basic employee time and data, with the information

automatically available to the staff in the practice. Most reports can be saved to

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CLIENT SELF-SERVICE FEATURES

The web-based Payroll Relief provides full online portals that the firm can tailor to the needs of each client, allowing the practice to determine if some clients can enter their own time, access their own reports or even manage their employee records, or have zero access to the system. Clients are only allowed to access and work in the areas that the firm specifically allows, and the online client portals are branded with only the firm's logos and branding elements. Likewise, client employees or contractors can be given the ability to login to self-service portals that enable them to view prior pay statements, W-2s, 1099s and other personal information. For additional collaboration features such as sharing non-payroll related documents and other files, the company offers a separate document management solution. 4.75

SUMMARY & PRICING

Payroll Relief is an easy-to-use system designed for small to mid-sized practices who wish to manage their clients' payroll, offering basic benefits management/accruals tracking with automation of most compliance aspects. The system includes reporting and e-filing to federal and most states, with the ability to print all entities. It includes good client and employee portals that keep the firm's brand in the client's mind and is best suited to firms managing fewer than 200 payrolls for small to mid size business clients with up to 1000 employees. Payroll Relief is offered for a first-year price of $997 for unlimited payroll processing with no additional fees. After the first year, users can pay on a per-payroll or per-paycheck basis, depending on their processing volume. Through the pay-per-payroll option, pricing is $5.95 per weekly run for up to 10 checks; $9.95 for other frequency runs. Under the per-paycheck option, for higher volume payroll service providers, pricing is based on volume and can go as low as $.50 per check.

2010 Overall Rating 4.5

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