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## HUMAN RESOURCES & PAYROLL

# Paramount Software Solutions, Inc. — Crest Payroll

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With its Crest Payroll solution, Paramount Software offers a comprehensive system for professional accounting firms managing the payrolls for multiple client businesses, providing support for any number of entities and employees, with a web-based system that includes unlimited payroll runs, direct deposit, and online client and employee portals branded with the professional firm's logo and other information. The system also includes automated compliance, with the vendor managing all reporting and payment functions. For this review, Crest Payroll fits the "Professional Prepared, with Assistance" model, providing accounting firm's with hands-on management of data and reporting functions, while having the compliance functions and recipient form functions automatically managed by Paramount, and with no interaction between the vendor and firm clients.

## BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS

As a fully web-based system designed specifically for accounting firms managing payrolls for multiple employers, Crest Payroll is accessed through the user's web

browser, with the system storing data in a secure hosting facility. Additional security functions make it possible to report and manage staff and client access to specific program areas. The system's main interface offers an intuitive horizontal menu for core program areas, such as employee management, payroll processing, tax compliance, reporting, client management, and associated programs like a sales tax compliance utility and paperless document management.

Wizards help guide company setup and, once initial client and employee data is entered, the program automatically helps process payroll functions by populating data into payroll runs as determined by default settings for frequencies and rates. Users are primarily left with editing tasks (especially for hourly employees) and reporting functions. A management overview dashboard provides key payroll and client information summaries, including due dates, liability account balances and other issues. A master client list is also available for working within client and employee records, with the ability to assign default values for virtually any information field, deduction, pay rate or other data across all or select employees or groups/departments.

In addition to any number of employers and employees, Crest allows multiple professional staff to work within the program at the same time, with the system preventing conflicts or overwrites, while enabling users to have access to the areas for which they are authorized. Pricing models are based on a flat fee per month, per client and are dependent on the total number of clients that the firm has. Users have the ability to process up to four payroll runs for each company each month, and at any frequency, with no charge per checks or reprints. Direct deposit is also included, with the ability to route employee pay to up to four accounts per employee.

With tax calculations performed on the server end of the program and automatically maintained by Paramount Software, the system includes rate tables and compliance functions for all states, D.C., Puerto Rico and all localities in the United States, including jurisdictions that require printed coupons or other special features. Multi-state employees are also easily managed, with the system guiding the user through income distribution, date entry and primary resident state selection, and the compliance functions automatically maintained as a service by the vendor.

Multi-employee data-entry views enable quick editing and review of employee hours, accruals, rates and other data, while more formal review and signoff processes include e-mail alert functions to ensure that payrolls are processed efficiently. Batch functions also allow for the processing of multiple payroll runs at the same time,

including those from different client employers, with reporting immediately available. Crest Payroll includes unlimited standard and custom deductions, substantial HR functions, from pre- and post-tax benefits management and tracking with automated payment of third-party providers to accruals, employee training management and document attachments to HR records. The program supports all pay types, including tipped workers, piece work, reimbursements, advances and contractors. 4.75

## **REPORTING & MONITORING**

Crest Payroll's compliance functions are automated, with the system intuitively knowing when reports and payments are due based on the states and localities that have been assigned to employers and employees. The system tracks due dates and prompts appropriate management to review and approve reports for filing, which is handled by Paramount Software as e-files or paper, depending upon the requirements of each taxing jurisdiction. The system also automates payment of liabilities, alerting users as to when a payment is to be made, notifying them if there are insufficient funds, and submitting payments by the due date to all authorities. The vendor does not escrow funds, leaving liabilities in the hands of the accounting firm or their client until the payments are scheduled. In addition to filing all tax compliance at the federal, state and local levels, Crest provide new-hire reporting functions. Management reports can be saved to Excel, PDF, XML, CSV and HTML formats, and can be customized using either the built-in report writer or by exporting to a Microsoft format. Employee management screens provide extensive customization and data tracking options, with the ability to quickly view summaries, histories and edit employee data as necessary. 4.75

## **INTEGRATION/IMPORT & EXPORT**

Crest Payroll offers integration with the other programs from Paramount Software (including document management) and directly integrates with the GL in QuickBooks and other accounting systems. Data can also be imported from Excel and other common formats, allowing import from most time clock programs. The system's employee timesheets offer management tools for viewing missing entries and monitoring productivity. 4.75

## **HELP/SUPPORT**

The web-based system includes line-by-line assistance, a traditional Help utility and links to resources. As a web-based system, the program is automatically kept updated

with the latest tax tables from all states, with no action required by the firm. Paramount's website offers mostly basic support resources, such as FAQs, but does include an option for live chat-based assistance. Live phone-based support is included in pricing. 4.75

## **CLIENT SELF-SERVICE FEATURES**

One of Crest Payroll's more advanced features is its client business portal, which the accounting firm can use to allow clients to enter some employee time data or share reports and other documents through a collaborative system. As a benefit to client employees, Crest Payroll also has secure employee self-service portals, which provide employees with access to prior pay stubs, W-2s, the ability to submit personal information changes, and even access to company training documents. The portals require no IT management by the accounting firms, yet they maintain only the firm's branding and allow firm members to control which clients and employees are granted access to what parts of the system, if any. 5

## **SUMMARY & PRICING**

Crest Payroll is a comprehensive payroll management system for professional accountants, capable of calculating and managing hundreds of client payrolls. Due date tracking is automated, and compliance functions are handled by the vendor and controlled by the accountant. The system handles all states and local jurisdictions across the United States and is bundled with client and employee self-service portals. Pricing is based on the number of client employers and their active employees. For a firm managing 26 clients with an average of up to five employees, total pricing per month, inclusive of direct deposit and all compliance reporting and payments, is \$13.60 per client. For a professional practice with 50 to 100 clients of the same size, pricing is \$12.75 per client. Pricing models are also available for larger practices and those managing larger client employee payrolls.

### **2010 Overall Rating 4.75**

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