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PRODUCT & SERVICE GUIDE

Form Magic, Inc. — Tax-Mate 1099

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Form Magic offers several specialty compliance systems, including programs designed for processing forms 1042, medical reimbursements and SEC filings. The company's year-end wage and information reporting program is Tax-Mate 1099, a system that supports all variations and transmittal letters for forms 1099 and 1098, along with forms W-2, W-2G, 1096 and 5498. The program offers e-filing or the ability to print to plain paper, and is the only installed W-2/1099 program in this year's review that is offered in versions for both PC and Mac computers.

Basic System Functions

Tax-Mate opens into a unique but intuitive home screen window that includes assistance features like the Quick Start Guide and "How Do I's," along with a payer selection list that is sortable by name, EIN and other options. The system also offers an "advanced find" search feature. Users can quickly create new payers or rollover client data from previous years. Additional system functions are also available via tabs and pull-down menus across the top of the window, and a forms area on the screen displays all available form types, which users can start by clicking the form name or by first accessing a payer.

When working in client/payer information screens, the work area provides very clean data-entry fields with data organized into tabbed categories for paper filers, electronic filers and alternate transmitters. After choosing a payer from the selection list, the forms area of the home screen displays how many of each form type are already active, along with a status column that gives a quick overview of form actions. When entering payee data, the program uses a tabbed interface that gives quick access back to the payer information, but also separates basic recipient data from financial input and offers the option for automatic calculation of FICA data. A form view is also available either for direct entry or for review purposes. The system's multi-recipient data input view is a great tool for quickly entering or viewing all form data for all recipients of a form type for a payer. The program's intuitive interface makes it easy to quickly move between forms, and various data import options are available.

The Tax-Mate system can be used to manage the year-end information reporting functions for any number of payer entities, and with any number of form recipients each. The system is not designed for after-the-fact payroll, and therefore does not offer tax tables for states but can be used to manage some of the related functions. Likewise, the system does not produce quarterly wage reporting forms (940 series). Updates to the program are made available for download and by CD, with new annual versions available in mid-December. 4.75

Reporting

Tax-Mate has a comprehensive library of annual information return forms for 1099 and 1098, along with W-2, W-2G, W-3, 1096 and 5498, but does not provide quarterly federal or state reporting options. The system can print to plain paper or pre-printed stock, and electronic filing is included with the program using the IRS' Fire and SSA's BSO online systems. The company also sells forms and window/double-window envelopes, and the system prints labels and self-addressing mailer forms, but does not offer self-sealing forms. Managerial reports offer only minimal customization and file formatting options. The program's managerial reporting features also include data verification utilities, which alert users to missing information and other errors. This process also provides a report that has self-totaling lists for quick review. The program does not offer a built-in billing and invoicing system, nor does the vendor offer outsourced compliance, printing and mailing services. TIN masking is available on all printed output. 3.75

Import/Export Capabilities

Tax-Mate can import data from most common file formats, including Excel, HTML, CSV and text-based documents, which allows it to acquire company and recipient data from most accounting programs, including QuickBooks and Peachtree. The system does not offer direct export into common file types or direct integration with third-party applications. If the user has Acrobat or an existing PDF print driver, reports and forms can be generated to PDF. 3.75

Help/Support

Tax-Mate is available in versions for Mac or PCs, with support up through Windows 7. It offers several assistive features, including the quick start guide and tips on the home screen, but the system's Help utility is simply a link to an online PDF user manual that does not provide context-sensitive functions or an index. The vendor's online learning center provides downloadable updates, the user manual and FAQs, but little other support aside from contact information. Program updates cannot be scheduled to automatically install. Live support is included in program pricing. 4.5

Summary & Pricing

Tax-Mate is an elegant year-end wage and information reporting system with a very intuitive and well-designed interface and options for multi-payee data entry that streamline many of the tasks involved in these compliance processes. The program is comprehensive in its 1099 and W-2 functionality, but is not designed to offer after-the-fact payroll options or quarterly reporting. The system is offered in four versions at prices ranging from \$95 to \$299: Print (for limited and print-only use); Print-Plus (with more forms support); Transmittal (providing electronic filing options); and the more comprehensive \$299 Tax-Mate 1099 Advisor system, which is most appropriate for professionals managing multiple clients with electronic services).

2010 Overall Rating 4.25

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