

Fish or Cut Bait?

Everyone's checklist for payroll software has the same basic criteria. Can I afford it? Check. Will I be able to make money with it by increasing my productivity without too much of a learning curve? Check. Will I satisfy my clients payroll needs with it? Check. Being able to satisfy clients payroll needs often seems like an obvious question until your hooks are set into a whale of a prospect or you are serving a client who presents an unpredictable request for reports that your existing payroll software simply can't handle.

Whether or not your payroll system is flexible enough to react to your client's demands is often tied to the way it changes and evolves with the rapid pace of technology. Payroll software systems built with flexibility in mind are designed to make evolutionary technical changes in simple incremental steps, instead of disruptive or revolutionary plunges — a painful reality for those who have been required to purchase and learn a brand new piece of software or install a new computer operating system to meet those unforeseen special requests.

For example, if your particular pay-

roll software was developed using Microsoft tools, it is forever locked into the Microsoft world. This piece of software won't work on a Mac, or a Unix or Linux system. Additionally, it won't easily communicate with software developed with another tool. The ability and benefits of transferring information between pieces of software in a clean, safe, sane way is not an option. If the software had been written to function across a variety of platforms (*i.e.* on Windows, Vista, Linux and/or Unix)—also termed portability, suddenly the options for importing and exporting data have increased exponentially.

Only a few years ago, Windows 95 was the operating system of choice for most accounting firms. Software written for Windows 95 commonly won't function on later versions of Windows including Microsoft's latest offering, Vista. By dramatic contrast, a highly portable payroll software system like UBCC is built to evolve with technology and installed on a Windows 95 system, still functions seamlessly on Windows 95 and/or an XP system, a Vista system, a Mac, or on Linux. Portable software makes adaptation to changing technology easy.

The speed and ease with which software adapts and flexes to meet changing needs is just as important as portability. In order to understand how flexible payroll software will operate in the future, look beyond the pretty screens and canned reports nearly all payroll software providers tout. Examine the foundation, the way the software was built, and how it might be enhanced.

Portable software

evolves to meet and satisfy shifting customer demands. Essentially, software portability will give you the opportunity to land that whale of a prospect or keep a client securely hooked. The ability to positively respond to unpredictable custom report requests and then confidentially deliver customized reports with little effort would separate your firm from



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your toughest payroll service competitor. Clients and prospects are unpredictable. How critical is it to your firm that your payroll software can meet unique payroll needs as clients evolve and grow?

Why would any payroll service bureau want to spend any time, energy, or resources having to go through hoops to be able to create custom reports? If landing the whale or simply keeping one on the hook is important, portability of your payroll software should be top of mind. Portability in payroll software allows for integration with any platform or operating system. Ultimately, portability in payroll software makes a world of difference when determining whether you successfully fish or have to cut bait. SR

