

Review: Pensoft Payroll 2010 Professional Edition

By Bryan Sims

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Pensoft Payroll 2010 Professional
www.pensoft.com

TechnoScore: 4.5

1 = Lowest Possible Score;
5 = Highest Possible Score

Clients giveth and your employees and the government taketh away every payroll. And that's assuming you can figure out how to run a payroll. After all, you have a JD, not a CPA. In this TechnoFeature article, Technolawyer of the Year Bryan Sims reviews Pensoft Payroll 2010 Professional Edition, Windows software for handling this necessary chore. Bryan started with the free trial, moved to the Lite edition, and then to the Professional edition. Given Bryan's extensive experience with the product, who better to tell you about its pros and cons. Don't miss Bryan's review of Pensoft Payroll 2010 Professional Edition.

INTRODUCTION

In early 2010, I started a solo practice, a move that put me in charge of running my own payroll. Because I have no accounting background and could no longer rely on the firm bookkeeper, I sought out a software program that would serve as a

full, easy-to-use payroll solution. I found that solution with Pensoft Payroll.

Pensoft Payroll comes in six editions that run on Windows XP or later: Lite (\$149), Standard (\$349), Professional (\$499), Enterprise (\$699), Platinum (\$1,149), and Accounting (\$1,629). Each edition enables you to enter and easily keep track of important employee information such as pay rate, date of hire, raise history, and tax details.

The Lite edition enables you to enter up to 10 employees and perform all basic payroll functions. The Standard edition upgrades that capability to 50 employees and adds the ability to import timecard information and export payroll data to a variety of accounting programs.

The Professional edition facilitates up to 50 employees (increasing to 250 at an additional cost) and includes the ability to export information for direct deposit, as well as generate W-2s. (With the other editions, you can only create W-2s with pre-printed forms.)

The more advanced editions (Enterprise, Platinum, and Accounting) enable you to enter a greater number of employees

and handle more complex payroll tasks.

However, for the sake of economy and efficiency, the Professional edition — which offers easy entry of information, good reporting features, and excellent export options that prevent repetitive data entry — should adequately meet the payroll requirements of most law firms.

Each of the six editions of Pensoft Payroll enables you to enter and easily keep track of important employee information such as pay rate, date of hire, raise history, and tax details.

DATA ENTRY

One of Pensoft Payroll's best features is its user-friendly simplicity. Not only does the program make it easy to enter background information about your employees, it also simplifies the process of entering payroll information. You can enter payroll data with just a few clicks, whether you pay hourly or salary wages on a weekly, semi-monthly, or customized schedule.

The software automatically calculates employee pay based on the information you enter, calculating tax information at the same time. While you would expect this feature from any payroll software, Pensoft Payroll manages the task effortlessly, with little required from you beyond entering the basic payroll information.

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REPORTING FEATURES

Pensoft Payroll 2010's has excellent reporting features. The program contains the necessary standard reports to enable you to generate the federal Form 941 and its state equivalent, displaying those reports in an easy-to-use format.

Using Pensoft Payroll, I completed my first Form 941 in just minutes, despite having never created one before. The program contained the information specific to my state (Illinois), enabling me to generate the required monthly payroll tax information.

In fact, as of yet, Pensoft Payroll has delivered every report I could possibly conceive of with just a few mouse clicks. The program includes a standard report that calculates the

total amount of money needed to cover a particular payroll period, a feature I have found invaluable. It also includes 12 different tabs of standard reports that cover all areas from payroll taxes to tracking employee leave.

EASY EXPORTING

I appreciate Pensoft Payroll's ability to seamlessly export payroll information to my preferred accounting program, Tabs3 General Ledger, with no additional data-entry required. Pensoft Payroll also export to Microsoft Money, Peachtree Accounting, QuickBooks, Juris, and several other programs.

FREE TRIAL PERIOD

Pensoft enables you to download a trial edition for free to see if the program's features work for you. Additionally, you can easily import the information you've entered from the free trial into the full edition, should you opt to make the purchase.

For example, I tried the free trial, then purchased the Lite edition, ultimately upgrading to Professional. The program maintained my data throughout these transitions with no trouble.

CONS

Of course, Pensoft Payroll 2010 is not perfect. First, the company could stand to improve its method of delivering the software.

As I explained above, I downloaded a free trial of Pensoft

Payroll before deciding to purchase the program from Pensoft's online store. While purchasing the software, I discovered that, in addition to the purchase price, Pensoft required me to pay \$29 in shipping to cover the cost of shipping me the CD. To add insult to injury, the product key that would allow me full access to the software was not available electronically — it would arrive with the CD.

When I asked Pensoft why I had to wait to receive my product key, I was told that they ship the CD to the mailing address of the credit card. I honestly don't understand why the company charged me \$29 to receive a CD that I didn't want, or why I had to wait to receive a product key for software I was able to purchase online.

The software seamlessly exports payroll information to my preferred accounting program, Tabs3 General Ledger, with no additional data-entry required.

The second detail that Pensoft might easily improve concerns an inefficiency in the way the program functions. When adding employees, the program requires you to designate the frequency of employee pay. Later, when generating payroll information, the program

requires you to manually designate the pay period that the payroll covers.

Given that you have already entered the frequency of employee pay, Pensoft should adjust the pay period automatically, based on the information you have provided. However, I have searched both the online help and the help included in the software and found no method to automate this function.

Finally, one last tiny quibble — the Lite edition does not contain the ability to export. For that feature, you have to pay an additional \$200 to upgrade to the Standard edition — a steep cost for a widely-used feature. In the future, I would like to see the exporting feature included in the Lite edition.

CONCLUSION

Pensoft Payroll 2010 makes administering payroll easy, even for

those of us without an accounting background. I am pleased with the product and will likely continue to use it. If the company did not charge such high shipping costs with the required CD, and if the Lite edition contained the export feature, I would not hesitate to give the software a TechnoScore of 5. As it stands, however, the software is powerful and easy to use. Thus, I give it a TechnoScore of 4.5 out of 5.

Bryan Sims is the sole shareholder in [Sims Law Firm, Ltd.](#), where he concentrates his practice in the areas of commercial litigation and civil appeals. Before entering private practice, Bryan worked as a law clerk for Illinois Supreme Court Justice S. Louis Rathje. Bryan is a Cum Laude graduate of Wheeling Jesuit University and a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Bryan has spoken on legal technology issues for both the Illinois State Bar Association and the Chicago Bar Association. He was named the 2005 TechnoLawyer of the year. Bryan blogs at [The Connected Lawyer](#).

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