

Seamless Transition: The Essential Guide for a Successful Payroll Software Conversion & Data Migration



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In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, staying ahead means keeping pace with technology. Growth in business ultimately requires upgrading technology. This is especially true in the payroll and human management (HCM) industry due to constantly changing regulations and competitive firms entering the market. However, for many CPA firms and payroll service bureaus, migrating your payroll service bureau's client base from one software platform to another feels like an impossible task.

It's no surprise that memories of past conversion pains might deter firms from implementing necessary technology enhancements, fearing

the drain on both financial and human capital that could otherwise fuel business growth. But there's good news—with the right payroll products, services, and a skilled implementation team, conversion is easier, faster, and far less stressful than you may think. Most importantly, it may prove your most competitive and profitable move yet.

The guide provides a roadmap for making this critical transition not just manageable but markedly beneficial for your business.

Why You Need to Change to a New Software Platform

The right payroll software platform elevates your business operations, ensuring accuracy, compliance with the latest legal requirements, and operational efficiency. This can provide your firm with a significant competitive edge, bolster client retention, and propel your return on investment and business growth to new heights.

However, many businesses find themselves handcuffed by payroll systems that are lacking in essential areas. Whether it's inadequate support, insufficient security measures, cumbersome usability, outdated technical features, or non-compliance issues, the reasons for switching to a new payroll software platform are compelling and critical to the continued success of your business.

Investing in the right payroll software is an investment in your business's future. With the dynamic landscape of business today, can you afford not to make the switch when your current platform is holding your business back?

The best time to start converting is today. It only gets harder if you wait, especially if your firm is in growth mode or has significant growth plans for the near future. Some firms are waiting for the perfect right time and assume that if they just wait a year or two things will get better, but by waiting, you are only raising the stakes and making the conversion even more complex.

"The limitations of our previous software precluded us from having conversations with certain prospects because we knew we weren't able to offer them an excellent experience. If you can't assure prospects an excellent experience, what differentiates you and your service from the next guy besides price?"

Geoffrey Ludt, Founder and CEO,
Ludt Software

Why You Need to Start with a Conversion Plan

Significant business moves require a well-thought-out strategy. The same goes for your payroll software conversion plan - for multiple reasons. You already run an efficient operation that maximizes your profit margins. But how much wiggle room do those margins allow for the disruption that a mass software platform conversion will cause? Likely, not much.

Step 1: Get to Know Your Conversion Team

"Hands down, the most important element of any payroll software conversion is planning," says Jereme Schumacher, IRIS Lead Implementation Consultant. No matter which payroll software provider you choose, that planning should begin with a thorough meet and greet.

"In the conversion kick-off meeting, we focus on really getting to know the accounting firm or payroll service bureau and how they run their business to make sure we're capturing any unique requirements," Schumacher says. Such particulars can include payroll clients in specific industries, including construction firms and restaurants, with legal and procedural nuances or employers with "handshake agreements" that call for non-conventional ways of collecting billed funds.

"What you'll sometimes discover is that business owners don't know they're doing something unique," Schumacher explains. "They think they're running their businesses just like anyone else."

Once a rapport is established and there's a full understanding of the payroll firm's culture, client base, and way of doing business, it's time to begin training the firm's staff to not only learn the new software platform themselves but to be able to teach it to the firm's payroll clients.

Step 2: Ease Into It

Throughout training and as you're rolling out a new payroll software platform, you'll want to start with your smaller, simpler clients first.

"It's easier to learn a new system and pick up process flows when you're working with smaller, simpler clients," Schumacher says. "Once your payroll firm's staff are comfortable with using and teaching the new system, you'll be better prepared for converting and serving larger, more complex employers, including those with complex deductions or earnings and those that opt for integrating more of the IRIS software elements other than just payroll."

Step 3: Client Communication

As your firm nears time to roll out a new software platform, you must give your clients a proper heads up. We recommend crafting a welcome packet that clearly spells out the following:

- Why you are switching platforms and how the decision will benefit client employers and their employees.
- What the new program will look like and include comparisons to the outdated platform. Include screenshots, videos, and FAQs.
- What the conversion will require from them, including employee information updates and time commitments for training administrators on the new software.
- All required or recommended documentation.
- A sample notice that employers can customize and distribute to employees, particularly if they opt for employee self-service access to various features of the new platform.
- Information on how to log into and navigate the basics of the system.

Setting expectations upfront with your clients is always the best method of approach in the conversion process.

Step 4: Mind the Timeline

Any well-crafted plan includes a deadline for completing various phases and the full project. Schumacher advises that working with IRIS, the average payroll firm can fully convert all clients within three months or less, though those with larger or more complex client bases may take up to six months.

“Moving employee data will not take long, depending upon whether a client chooses to move data en masse or check-by-check, covering the whole year or just the current quarter, etc.,” adds Brian Perkins, IRIS Director of Payroll Services. “Each payroll firm converts differently, but most any client’s full database can be turned around in a single pay period with the exception of much larger clients.”

Getting Started with a Payroll Software Conversion

Considering a conversion? IRIS Payroll Software has cracked the code of successful, stress-free payroll software conversions. We provide three levels of assistance to help move your firm to a more modern platform and ease your transition away from the legacy system that is limiting your success.

Assisted Conversion

This option is only available if no data exports are available from your existing platform. In this case, the IRIS Payroll Conversion Team will manually enter your employee data and current year history wages by quarter into the system. The estimated turnaround time for your client will be 1-2 weeks, depending on the complexity of the information needed to enter.

Full-Service Conversion

With full assistance, your IRIS client success manager will train your team and/or assist in creating client shells, which are customizable according to industry verticals and other nuances. Then, with your assistance, the data conversion team will extract your current payroll data from your platform. If using this option, we'll need to arrange an online meeting, or your payroll firm must provide a step-by-step guide that explains how we'll retrieve data from your origin system. This option allows you to focus solely on the client base that has been converted and will enable IRIS to streamline the transfer of your client data for you. Total client base conversion timeline is 3 to 6 months, depending on complexity and available client resources for data verification.



“At first, I was hesitant to allow IRIS to assist with entering my client data, afraid their data entry quality wasn’t as good as mine. But it quickly became obvious that it was taking me far too long to get all my clients accounts implemented. So, when I finally let IRIS take over conversion, it was a huge sense of relief - Constant movement going on every day. Where I was able to add just one client a day to the new platform, they were able to add 10. It sped things up by months.”

Brian Bohle, Founder and CEO,
InFocus Payroll

On-Site Conversion

Work via the previous options is done at IRIS's offices. However, your payroll service bureau can opt for an onsite conversion that involves senior conversion consultants completing the full conversion at your location. This is a popular option for payroll firms with larger, more complex or niche client bases and for those that simply prefer to keep all data onsite with face-to-face coordination and conversion.

This is also a popular option for those firms who are looking for a quicker conversion timeline. It also works well for bigger payroll providers that employ more processors than the average firm and will benefit from more intense, in-person training. This option allows for dedicated resources and a quicker, more efficient data conversion. While onsite, IRIS can convert approximately 25 to 30 clients per day, depending on complexity and available client resources for data verification.

"When we first started our software conversion, we didn't know what we didn't know. With IRIS's conversion team here in our offices, they were able to ask us specific questions and tailor a system that addressed all the nuances of our particular payroll. That has helped tremendously with the client conversions and new client onboardings that have taken place since they left."

**Brittney Bennett, COO,
Applied Payroll Solutions**



Ready to Kickstart Your Payroll Software Platform Conversion?

Don't let the perceived stress of converting your client base delay your firm from moving to a modern and highly competitive payroll platform. IRIS Payroll Software has changed the game for payroll firms looking to convert, offering unprecedented opportunities to leverage veteran payroll expertise and industry-leading technology.

A payroll software provider should be able to handle your conversion faster and with less disruption to your firm's day-to-day operations, allowing you to save money while realizing the efficiencies and power of the platform sooner. For instance, using the IRIS conversion team can reduce your conversion churn by up to 95%! You'll keep your existing customers happy, safeguarding your client retention rate throughout the conversion process by allowing your staff to focus on maintaining a great client experience while we focus on converting your data and delivering ready-to-run payrolls for you.

Get started today learning more about IRIS payroll solutions at IRISglobal.com/payroll/

"Today, our confidence level in the product and service we're able to provide clients has skyrocketed, and our ability to sell is unlimited. If someone had asked just nine months ago whether we could add another 100 clients in the next 10 months, I'd have said no. Growth of any amount just wasn't scalable. Now, that growth engine has started running and we're finally saying, 'Alright, let's go get another 100 clients.' We've got our eye on ultimately hitting 1,000 clients. That goal would not have been possible with the product we were using before."

Martin Nowlin, CEO,
Applied Payroll Solutions

IRIS Americas is part of IRIS Software Group. IRIS payroll solutions exist to take the pain out of processes and enable professionals working in CPA firms and payroll service bureaus businesses comply with regulations, improve efficiency and drive growth. IRIS Americas brands include IRIS Star Practice Management, IRIS Global Workforce, IRIS Innervision, IRIS Practice Engine, Doc.It, PSI Payroll, IRIS HCM, Apex, AccountantsWorld, Senta and Conarc.

IRIS partners with thousands of CPA firms, payroll service bureaus and small to midsize businesses across North America, including 52 of the top 100 US CPA firms. We offer innovative Payroll and HR solutions, making us the preferred partner in the region. Globally, IRIS serves over 100,000 customers, with 80% having tenure of five or more years.

