info
Newsletter
For Sage Abra HRMS

What's Inside

For Your Information

According to a survey of 1,200 adults sponsored by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, 84% said that health insurance has become a "very important" characteristic when choosing a new job. Medical insurance outranked all other 14 benefits in the survey. Pay ranked 10th on the survey—right below "being creative and intellectually stimulated."

Protect Your Data

Automate Payroll And HR Tasks To Save Time, Resources, And Money

Payroll and HR tasks are some of the most time and paper consuming tasks in any organization. Automating payroll and HR functions can go a long way toward lowering your administrative overhead costs and helping you reduce paper consumption. To automate payroll requires integrating a number of different elements including: time and attendance, payroll functions, HR tasks, financial systems, employee self-service, and benefits enrollment, as well as any links to outside entities, such as benefit providers, tax authorities, and banks. Let's learn more about how Sage Abra HRMS can help.

Direct Deposit

Direct Deposit functionality is included with Abra Payroll. For organizations looking to reduce the volume of paper involved in payroll processing, direct deposit is a great start—it can reduce check printing and mailing costs significantly.

Direct deposit of paychecks adds convenience for your employees and supports an unlimited number of direct deposit accounts for each employee as well as automatic ACH file creation.

Paperless Pay Notifications

Many companies using direct deposit still print, mail, and distribute pay notices to employees. As a natural extension to direct deposit, some companies are now using electronic advice of pay

Automating payroll and HR functions can help you save time and reduce paper consumption.

notices. By eliminating the paper, you eliminate the cost associated with printing, mailing, and distributing the notices.

When you use Abra Payroll in conjunction with the Sage Abra ESS module, employees are able to view and print their electronic advice of pay through the self-service portal. Some states have provisions about how the advice of pay should be delivered; we will be happy to help you ensure your system is in compliance with local and state regulations.

PayCards

According to the American Payroll Association, as many as 25 percent of the working population in the United States does not have a bank account. Without a bank account, direct deposit can't be used, but there's still a way to automate payroll for these employees.

Sage Software recently introduced Sage Payroll PayCards, a new employee payment option for small and mid-sized businesses and organizations. Sage PayCards give employees convenient and immediate access to their pay, without the hassle and expense of cashing checks. They can be used to pay monthly or recurring bills, track expenses, view account balances and transactions online, and make online purchases. The cards are reloadable, providing a new, simple, and cost-effective way to pay your employees.

Compliments of:

BOTTOMLINE SOFTWARE, INC.
SOFTWARE THAT MEANS BUSINESS!

Employee Self Service

Employee self-service programs have gained momentum quickly over the past few years, and nowhere are the benefits greater than in payroll.

Using technology to lower administrative costs while providing better service to employees satisfies the needs of both HR departments and the employees they serve.

Companies that have deployed self-service tools enjoy improved data accuracy, reduced costs, and greater work efficiency for benefits administrators. Towers Perrin research group found that HR departments using Web-based employee self-service programs reported greater timeliness of employee data, an average of 38 percent improvement in accuracy, and an average workload reduction of 50 percent.

Sage Abra ESS

The Sage Abra ESS module allows employees to view and update their own HR and payroll-related information anytime, anywhere via an intranet or Internet connection. Changes made in the system are communicated to all relevant parties automatically.

Employees can update personal information and view benefit elections, absence transactions, payroll information, and more. They can view their own W-2 and submit a new W-4 form to change their federal withholding elections. A digital signature feature keeps this process secure and paperless.

Benefit information is available for viewing by employees. They can check insurance benefits, employee premium costs, and dependent information.

As we mentioned, Abra ESS allows employees to view and print their pay stubs. They can view full paycheck details, payroll deductions, and tax withholding information.

Employee activities such as requests for time off and W-4 form changes are automated, resulting in faster approvals and less paperwork.

Managers can view employee compensation and can access their direct and indirect reports' emergency contacts, skills, events, and certifications, as well as view and approve requests for time off.

Online Benefits Enrollment

The annual open enrollment period often involves a flood of paperwork as you distribute forms and printed information, and then collect and manually enter the data from those forms and communicate changes and updates with benefit providers.

By moving benefits enrollment online, to the Internet or your company intranet, you'll not only save paper, but time, effort, and money as well.

Abra Benefits Enrollment

Rather than having employees fill out and return paper forms to your HR department, with Abra Benefits Enrollment employees fill out electronic forms with mandatory entries. Help screens can answer frequently asked questions and links to providers' sites can help employees make educated decisions.

You can easily manage the process, noting which employees have yet to complete their enrollment. Automatic e-mail reminders can be sent to those who have not completed the process, reminding them to do so. As a result, less staff is required to manage the project, and it's completed more quickly and more accurately.

Abra Benefits Messenger

The Sage Abra Benefits Messenger automatically extracts the benefits data from your Sage Abra HR database, reformats it to meet the specific requirements of each benefit carrier, and then securely transmits it to the carriers over the Internet.

When it's this easy to communicate with your carriers, you'll gain the flexibility to switch carriers when you need to, allowing you to find the most cost-effective insurance plans for your company.

Time Collection

The task of collecting employee timesheet data in advance of every pay period typically involves much paper and plenty of effort. Fortunately, there are tools to automate and streamline this process.

Sage TimeSheet

Sage TimeSheet is a Web-based time and expense tracking system for project-oriented companies. Sage TimeSheet software allows staff to record actual time worked and expenses incurred against specific projects, jobs, tasks, and work orders. Sage TimeSheet has a direct interface with Sage Abra Payroll, and also interfaces with project management and billing systems.

Time Clock Interface

There are dozens of electronic time-collection systems available in the marketplace that are capable of exporting an electronic file with employee time data. This data can be imported into Sage Abra Payroll, eliminating the need to manually enter data from paper timesheets. We are available to help you with your import design, give us a call.

Electronic Tax Filing

Compliance with government regulations can be a paper-intensive process. By outsourcing your organization's tax filing tasks, you'll move further toward the goal of a paperless payroll system.

Sage Tax Filing Services is a complete outsourced tax filing service from Sage Software. Sage Tax Filing Services supports the IRS EFTPS (Electronic Federal Tax Payment System), state and local income tax, state unemployment insurance, state disability insurance, and IRS Forms 940 and 941. The service also can print and mail your employees' W-2 forms and file via magnetic media. You simply upload an electronic file containing your tax data to Sage Tax Filing Services following each payroll cycle.

Sage Abra is equipped with the power to assist you with your automation goals. Give us a call for more information. ☆

Employee Training Is Good For Your Business

You know a well-trained workforce is good for business, but it might be even better than you think. Hackett Benchmarking and Research, a firm that tracks best practices in HR and finance, reports that companies that spend comparatively more on training have a higher internal placement rate that reduces recruiting costs. In addition, companies that invest more in training have a lower annual turnover rate. In addition to these benefits, certain types of training such workplace harassment training can actually reduce your company's risk of lawsuits and costly fines. How can you maximize the benefits of workplace training while minimizing the expense of managing it? Sage Compliance Trainer and the Sage Abra HRMS Train module are excellent tools for helping you do just that.

Sage Compliance Trainer

Sage Compliance Trainer, a Web-based training solution from Sage Software, has self-paced courses available anytime and from anywhere. The program is entirely Web-based so no on-site installation is required.

Sage Compliance Trainer can help your company comply with state regulations, track and monitor attendance for government mandates, and keep accurate and compliant training records for audits.

The course library includes two versions of *Preventing Workplace Harassment and Discrimination*. The Supervisor version meets the requirement in California and Connecticut that supervisors take a total of two hours of training to be in compliance with state legislation.

Using Sage Compliance Trainer you can send e-mail reminders to employees who have not completed training and store course completion documentation electronically.

Sage Abra Train

The Sage Abra Train module is specifically designed to help you organize and track workforce training. This module allows you to effectively establish and administer internal training programs and track employee certifications. It helps you manage logistics, such as maintenance of class rosters and training locations, and even the setup and administration of required employee training program sequences. It will help you stay on top of employee certifications and continuing education credits, as well as managing all necessary requirements and prerequisites.

Program Management

You may have training classes that employees need to complete in a specific sequence. The Sage Abra Train module allows you to define curricula that employees must complete in order to achieve desired levels of competency. Training programs can be automatically assigned to a particular worker classification or job title. You can then schedule workers for the necessary training, track their progress in your programs, and make sure that their training is completed as scheduled.

Enrollment And Tracking

The Sage Abra Train module includes comprehensive scheduling and enrollment capabilities. You can schedule attendance and manage class rosters for students and instructors. The Sage Abra Train module checks class capacities, and if a class is full, employees can be placed on a waiting list and then be added automatically to the class if a space opens up. The Sage Abra Train module even checks for room conflicts and will notify you if you inadvertently double-book a room.

Management And Reporting

The reporting options in Sage Abra Train provide you with quick access to information. The broad selection of standard reports includes employee certifications, training history, class rosters, and tuition reimbursements. Built-in analysis tools make it easy to manage your budget and evaluate cost/benefit relationships. You can analyze training costs by employee, course, job classification, department, or organizational level, allowing you to allocate costs accurately and equitably.

You also can build your own reports with the easy-to-use Sage Abra Secure Query report writer or the bundled Crystal Reports® for your company's more complex reporting needs.

Powerful Integration

The Sage Abra Train module is integrated with Sage Abra HR, allowing you to automatically assign training requirements to new hires or promoted employees. And when implemented in conjunction with Sage Abra ESS, employees and managers can access course catalogs and their personal training information through the Internet or company intranet.

Call us today to discuss how the Sage Abra Train module and Sage Compliance Trainer can benefit your organization. ☆

Tips & Tricks

Strong Passwords

Did you know that a blank password (no password) is more secure than a weak password, such as 1234? Many users select a password because it is easy to remember, but criminals can easily guess a simple password. On computers using Windows XP, an account without a password cannot be accessed remotely by means such as a network or the Internet.

However, we are not recommending that you use a blank password—we simply want to stress the danger of using a weak password. Sage Abra HRMS now supports what are termed Strong Passwords, and it makes sense to take advantage of this capability. So just what makes a password strong?

While the definitions vary, a strong password typically has a minimum length of seven characters and includes upper and lowercase letters, numerals, or symbols. In Sage Abra Suite 7.60 and Sage HRMS 8.30 the password format is modified to support 10 characters which can consist of alpha characters (uppercase and lowercase), numbers, and symbols. Basically any standard keyboard character will be accepted (ASCII values 33 through 127) in the password except the space key. ☆

In The Spotlight
Protect Your Data

Business depends on technology. You would find it very difficult to operate without your company's servers, workstations, laptop computers, peripherals, and the important data stored within that technology. When something is this valuable, it makes sense to invest in its security. Your technology is vulnerable to a number of dangers, from natural disasters, to power interruptions, to simply wearing out. In this article we'll offer suggestions for keeping your technology and your data safe.

Protect Your Power

Power spikes or disruptions cause more data loss than all other natural disasters combined. Every piece of crucial electronic equipment should be connected to an UPS (uninterrupted power supply) device. It is a good idea to place a small UPS device on each workstation, because a power interruption during a transaction update, for example, could result in corrupted data.

UPS devices provide continuous, conditioned power capable of evening out surges and supplying varying amounts of auxiliary power to allow you to safely shut your equipment down in the event of a full outage. Once your equipment is safely shut down, it is a good idea to completely unplug equipment to keep it entirely off the grid until power is restored.

Tape Versus Disk Backup Systems

The importance of a reliable and efficient backup system cannot be overstated. Today's backup software is robust and sophisticated. Carefully choose a solution with powerful features, backed by a company you trust. The investment in a modern backup solution including tapes, drives, and software is significant. However, the return on your investment will be immediate and undeniable should disaster strike.

Tape backup systems are still the dominant backup method used by savvy small and mid-sized organizations. Symantec, a leading publisher of backup systems, notes that tape remains the best solution for long-term and offsite storage. Symantec cites its portability and ruggedness as factors making tape the most efficient way to protect a business from disaster or for long-term storage.

Disk-based backup systems are gaining in popularity. A disk-based backup solution typically writes the same data to a file on a disk volume as it would write to a tape drive. When used conscientiously, disk drives can provide faster, more flexible backups and restores than tape can.

During your daily operations, make it a practice to periodically save important files you're working with to a separate hard drive, portable storage drive, or CD. And whatever backup system you select, you must periodically do a test of your ability to restore data from backup. Don't wait to test it at that critical time and find it doesn't work the way you expected.

Shadow Backup Can Save The Day

Inherent in many Windows operating systems is a useful protective tool called Shadow Backup. Essentially, this feature uses available space on your server to make copies of directories and files on a timetable you specify. Should you accidentally delete or overwrite a valuable file, you can simply scan through the earlier saved versions of the file and restore the one from before your accident.

Offsite Storage

It is imperative that your backup data be moved to offsite storage regularly. This ensures that if something happens to your facility, your backups will not be destroyed. Several companies provide offsite storage services that include picking up and delivering tapes when they need to be rotated. At minimum, have a trusted employee take a backup tape home with them each night.

Disaster Recovery Planning

Accidents happen. So do power outages, natural disasters, and malicious attacks. Systems wear out and have to be replaced. Prepare a comprehensive disaster recovery plan specific to your organization.

A person or a group of people should be charged with constantly supervising and documenting your organization's disaster preparation efforts. Someone should install and maintain hardware protection devices, and make sure all departments have a plan if the server goes down.

Call for help in developing your disaster recovery plan. ☆

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Authorized Partner

Bottomline Software, Inc.

P.O. Box 1662
Ottumwa, IA 52501

(641) 684-9009
(641) 684-9009 fax

Email:
info@btmlinesoft.com

Web Site:
www.btmlinesoft.com

iscpa
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CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
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