

**Volume 4
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Headline News

eRecruiter Update

Abra eRecruiter is available now for Version 8.1 and will be available with the new Version 7.5 release of Abra Suite. If you are not yet familiar with the power of this latest module for Sage Abra HRMS, give us a call for complete details or a demonstration.

**The
Attendance
Module**

See page 4
for more info!

Sage Abra Makes Paperless Payroll A Reality

Paperless payroll refers to the practice of eliminating paperwork in every phase of the payroll process, for the purpose of streamlining operations, reducing costs, and delivering faster, more convenient employee service.

Paperless payroll relies on electronic methods to replace paper and leverages employee self-service solutions to reduce the need for manual processes. Some areas where you could reduce manual processes include the handling of time reports, the printing and distribution of conventional paper payroll checks or payment advice documents, the distribution of W-2s, and more.

The benefits of paperless pay initiatives can be enormous. Cost reduction in the production and delivery of pay to employees is the key driver for many organizations. Employee service levels are also boosted by secure access to personal pay information as well as self-service transactions such as reporting time, managing direct deposit, or changing W-4 information. Expanding paperless payroll to tax filing and benefits enrollment increases your payback.

In this article we will show how Sage Abra HRMS can make paperless payroll a reality for your organization.

Direct Deposit & Beyond

Direct deposit is included with Abra Payroll. It supports an unlimited number of direct deposit accounts for each employee as well as automatic ACH file creation. For organizations looking to reduce the volume of paper involved in payroll processing, direct deposit is a good start—it can reduce check printing and mailing costs significantly.

According to the American Bankers Association, each payroll check costs the company an average of \$1.07 to process, while direct deposit costs around 5 cents.

Paperless Stubs

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

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

Legalties

Most states require employers to provide a statement detailing an employee's pay information. A reasonable interpretation of the laws suggests an employer can comply with the pay stub requirements in these states by furnishing an electronic pay stub.

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Sage Abra has many tools that can increase your efficiency and save you money in your quest for a paperless payroll.

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Other states expand this provision, requiring that a printed statement be provided. The ability to print an electronic copy is generally accepted as being compliant with this rule. Some states require an employee's consent, meaning an individual could elect to receive a printed copy of his or her stub.

When you use **Abra Payroll** in conjunction with the Sage Abra ESS module, employees can view and print their pay stub detail through the self-service portal. We will be happy to help ensure your system is in compliance with local and state regulations.

Employee Self-Service

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

Web-based systems enable employees to update W-4 data themselves, which reduces errors and eliminates the need for your payroll or HR clerks to constantly update records or pull copies of old payroll records. Using a Web-based employee self-service solution, employees can check their payroll information online anytime. This is a benefit to employees and can give back hours of the HR administrator's day that was previously spent attending to routine employee requests.

Abra ESS

The Sage Abra ESS module allows employees to take ownership of their personal information, saving considerable time, HR overhead—and paper!

The Abra ESS module allows employees to view and update their own HR and payroll-related information anytime, anyplace via an intranet or the Internet. Changes made to 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 view-

ing 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.

Communication processes are facilitated and paper is saved by providing a centralized and easily accessible location for company policies, announcements, and links to external URLs.

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, personnel, and job information. They can access their direct and indirect reports' emergency contacts, skills, events, and certifications. Through Abra ESS, managers can view and post employee notes, view birthday lists, print attendance information, and review and approve time-off requests. You also can grant supervisors permission to view and approve time off requests, while maintaining the confidentiality of other employee information.

Abra ESS is part of Abra Workforce Connections.

Online Benefits Enrollment

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

When benefit data is available online, the volume of paper you need to mail to employees drops dramatically. You can email documents or make them available for download from your Web site. Sending the benefit information electronically means you spend less time preparing and routing benefit information. In addition, you can reduce your postage and paper costs. 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 re-

turn 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 oversee the process, noting which employees have yet to complete their enrollment. Automatic email reminders can be sent reminding those who have not completed the process to do so, keeping the project on schedule.

As a result, less staff is required to manage the project, and it's completed more quickly and more accurately.


The convenience of Abra Benefits Enrollment is apparent during open enrollment and your employees and managers can use it throughout the year to update their records as life events impact their benefits. Both employees and their managers can add dependents, change marital status, change dependent status, and designate dependents as students, all without filling out a single paper form.

Abra Benefits Enrollment is part of Abra Workforce Connections.

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 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.

Your organization can go a long way toward a paperless payroll system using Sage Abra. We can help; give us a call. 

Sage Abra Reporting Tools

Data output is often ranked as the single most important element of a business software system. You must be able to lay your hand (or your eyes) on the data you need in an efficient and expedient manner. Sage Abra HRMS includes several built-in reporting tools that allow you to do just that. From the 200 plus Standard Reports, to various analyses, Abra Secure Query and Crystal Reports®, Sage Abra places reporting tools firmly in your control. Let's learn more about the reporting options Sage Abra has to offer.

Standard Reports

Are you aware that there are more than 200 standard reports included with Sage Abra HRMS? In addition to printing to your printer, each report can be previewed on your screen, exported to a file for use by other applications, or emailed through Microsoft Outlook to the recipient of your choice. Many companies successfully rely on standard reports for virtually all of their HR, Payroll, Attendance, Training, and System reporting needs. But you've got plenty of options when you have a specific need.

Sage Abra Analyses

When you need to examine your data for trends and indicators, **Sage Abra Analyses** are the tool of choice. This collection of queries provides an analytical look at critical areas such as HR, Payroll, and Attendance.

Use the Analyses within the Abra HR module to compare performance versus longevity or to monitor OSHA incidents. Use the Analyses within Abra Payroll to take an in-depth look at your tax liability or perform a 941 audit. Within the Abra Attendance module, Analyses will show you absences by day or by hour to help you identify attendance issues. Sage Abra Analyses are a fast and effective way to uncover the analytical data you need.

Crystal Reports

Crystal Reports® is an amazingly powerful, graphical, industry-standard report writer included with Sage Abra.

By pairing Crystal Reports with Sage Abra, you have access to features and capabilities not available with Standard Reports or Abra Secure Query. A side benefit of Crystal is that it is the de facto standard for many of today's software packages. If you master Crystal Reports for Sage Abra, the exact same skill set applies in every other application where you find Crystal Reports.

Custom Crystal Reports Library

Sage Abra includes dozens of prepared custom reports. They are categorized as: Attendance, HR, Payroll, Recruiting, Training, and Custom reports. You may use these reports as they are designed or modify them to suit your individual business needs.

Crystal Reports includes over 160 built-in functions and operators as well as user-defined functions for complete control over report formatting, complex logic, and data selection. The powerful Formula Workshop lets you create valuable summary data that might not be present in your Sage Abra database.

You'll be able to customize the look of your reports by adding logos, pictures, shapes and colors, or simply changing the font. Choose from 12 types of graphs, or add hyperlinks, drill downs, underlines, and running totals. Crystal Reports includes customizable templates and more than 100 formatting options for virtually unlimited control over the presentation of your data.

You can publish your reports to the Web with automatic HTML output, export the report to Microsoft Word or Excel, or email the reports in one of 15 file formats.

We'd be pleased to provide training on Crystal Reports to help you better utilize its many features and functions. Or we can work with you to design a custom report that meets your company's needs.

Abra Secure Query

Abra Secure Query is an excellent tool for creating a one-time ad hoc report or a standing report you will use again and again.

You can create a query to provide you with the current, pertinent data you need. And Abra Secure Query doesn't require an understanding of the underlying data structure, or an in-depth knowledge of custom report writing tools.

In addition, you can save and add a query to a library of queries to use at any time. If you like, you can designate your queries as *Public* to share your queries with other users.

Generating a new query is easy. A wizard guides you through selecting the fields, grouping information, choosing the sort order, filtering the data, and electing the desired output format.

There are many uses for Abra Secure Query. In Abra HR, you can use it to generate an Excel spreadsheet of 401(k) contributions to your retirement plan administrator—even email the query directly to the administrator with a copy to yourself. Output your company listing by department to an ASCII file for use with organization chart software.

If you're using Abra Train, you can ensure your training stays on track with a query list of employees who have completed a required course.

In Abra Payroll, you could use Abra Secure Query to create a Word document listing all employees who received a car allowance last year. Then use the mail-merge process to send a letter updating terms of the plan to these employees. You could run a report of vacation hours paid YTD, sorted by department, to give to managers, or quickly report on FMLA absence hours within a certain time frame.

Create a simple report listing which employees have birthdays this month and sort it by manager or department.

Sage Abra provides many options for recalling, reviewing, and sharing its data. Call us with your reporting questions. ☆



In The Spotlight: Sage Abra HRMS Attendance Module

The Sage Abra Attendance module fully integrates with Sage Abra HR and Abra Payroll, adding enormous functionality to your HRMS solution. Let's learn more about Sage Abra Attendance.

Ultimate Flexibility

Using the Attendance module, you can manage an unlimited number of time-off plans. Moreover, you may associate any number of these plans with an individual employee. Use these plans to manage regular absences such as vacation, personal leave, and illness, as well as incident-based time off such as jury duty, medical leave, or bereavement. Some attendance plans are based on an accrual method, with hours accrued at varying rates depending on benefit type and seniority. Others plans may offer a fixed number of hours every month or year. However your organization's time-off plans are structured, it is likely that Abra Attendance can support them.

Compliance Issues

With regulations such as the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), employers must offer paid and unpaid leave options for their employees. Sage Abra Attendance fully supports the FMLA, simplifying this complex set of regulations to ensure your company remains in compliance.

Spot Problems And Trends

Abra Attendance helps you to identify attendance problems such as frequent Monday tardies or numerous Friday absences. It also can identify those employees with perfect attendance or those not using their allotted vacation time. You can easily compare time off allowed versus actual days taken. You may choose to impose a point system for your attendance plans, where employees receive points for each absence. The **Absence Points** report allows you to monitor these points to highlight attendance problems. With comprehensive information available, you are better prepared to make strategic decisions about employee attendance and the effectiveness of your company's attendance policies.

Absence Transactions

When you record an absence transaction for an employee, you must also enter the reason for the absence. These reason codes help to ensure consistency, facilitate reporting, and prevent errors in data entry. A code table contains many predefined absence reasons such as Jury Duty, Military Leave, and Tardy. You can add codes as necessary, or modify the existing codes to suit the way you do business. Each time you record an employee's absence, you add a transaction to the employee's attendance record. A handy utility allows you to create absence transactions for a paid holiday for all employees—instantly. The **Absence Transactions** page contains a list of all the transactions for an employee. When you create an absence transaction, you can track the date, day of week, reason, hours, and a comment.

Integration With Payroll

When used in conjunction with Sage Abra Payroll, you can direct the



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Payroll module to calculate accruals for employee pay periods and hours worked. In addition, the Payroll module transfers paid absence transactions such as vacation, illness, and personal leave to the Attendance module where they are added to employee absence transaction records.

If you do not use Sage Abra Payroll, or if you have plans whose accruals are not based on hours or days worked, you can use the Accrue Time function in Attendance to accrue attendance plans to a specified date.

Reporting And Queries

Take advantage of dozens of standard reports with useful information including FMLA tracking, medical recertification, and even a ranked list by hours absent. The **Crystal Reports** integration empowers you to create flexible custom reports, ensuring you can isolate the precise data you need to effectively manage your employees' attendance.

Using the Sage Abra Secure Query tool, you can obtain an instant, year-to-date snapshot of employee attendance. This same tool makes answering ad hoc questions quick and easy, and saves the time required to create a complex report.

Sage Abra Attendance can help make attendance tracking efficient and trouble free. Call us for more details.

