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2008 Review of Professional Payroll Systems

Sage Abra Payroll, version 7.6, is Sage Software's payroll component for the vendor's mid-enterprise level Sage Abra HRMS Suite. The program, designed to be used in-house by a business' payroll and HR staff, is capable of supporting any number of companies, subsidiary units and employees and, therefore, with special licensing, it can also be used by a professional payroll service provider. The system is completely integrated into the HR suite, and also offers direct integration with the GL components in many of Sage Software's accounting applications, as well as data sharing capabilities with other programs.

In addition to extensive human resources functions, benefits management and workflow process tools, direct deposit and electronic filing options are available. The program also supports employment and payroll tax reporting to federal and all states (as well as Canada through a separate program version). Pricing for the Sage Abra Payroll module is based upon employees and the number of users, but generally starts around \$2,000 and requires use of the Sage Abra HRMS system. Sage Software is once again a sponsor of the annual National Payroll Week, to be held September 1-5, 2008 (www.NationalPayrollWeek.com).

Also worth noting is that Sage Software recently released a new Sage Abra Payroll module for the v8.x Sage Abra HRMS platform, which supports the SQL Server platform.

That new payroll module (version 8.4) includes expanded capabilities, like support for step rates and variable pay plans, to further support the payroll processing needs of union shops, manufacturers, government organizations, etc.

DATA ENTRY & KEY FEATURES – 5 Stars

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income (tracked by an accrual plan), running direct deposits, recommendations, and period end processes. Users can process unlimited trial payroll runs as needed.

During initial setup of the payroll program, guided interview functions lead users through basic company and employee data sheets, as well as more advanced entry of federal, state and local tax information, unlimited pay types and rates, any number of standard or customizable deductions, departments, projects and groups, benefits functions, classification codes, and other features. Information entry sheets are customizable and provide tabbed access to categories, along with pull-down selection lists for many fields, including earnings, deduction types, account numbers, groups, and other rules. Advanced benefits management functions also provide quick access to general information, as well as employer matching, earnings basis and general data.

A mass update tool is also available for making changes across all employees, departments or other groups. Sage's employee self-service option gives company staff the ability to access prior paycheck stubs, enter new personal information and communicate with HR staff for issues such as leave requests.

Sage Abra's HR functionality integrates with the payroll functions to provide extensive benefits and workforce management functions, including recruiting and tracking of employee education and performance reviews. It also helps ensure compliance with EEO, FMLA, OSHA, COBRA and HIPAA regulations.

REPORTING CAPABILITIES – 5 Stars

Sage Abra offers a comprehensive report management center that includes more than 100 customizable options and templates, including wages, deductions, benefits, departmental and human resources output, along with the Secure Query Report

Writer. Output formats include PDF, Word, Excel and plain text. In addition

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Sage Abra Payroll is an integral component of the vendor's HRMS Suite, providing excellent core capabilities that enable it to manage businesses of any size and reporting requirements. The system sports some of the best customization options available and offers comprehensive reporting and compliance. The employee self-service option is also a great tool. Sage Abra is best suited to mid-market and larger organizations with 75 or more employees, sensitive compliance requirements and multiple geographic locations.

2008 Overall Rating: 4.5 Stars

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