From the Sept. 2010 Review of Professional
Payroll Systems*.*

Sage
Software is well-known for its accounting and business management systems, with products ranging from the Peachtree small business bookkeeping system to applications
and ERP systems for large enterprises. The Sage Abra Suite is the software vendor's premier payroll and human resources management system, providing extensive payroll
processing and management capabilities for businesses of any size, including comprehensive tax compliance functions, extensive deduction tracking and third-party
payment controls, electronic filing and employee self-service functions. It
also offers tight integration with ERPs, benefits administration, HR policy development and em-ployee management systems. Although the system can be used to manage multiple companies and divisions, its deep feature set is primarily intended for use directly by employers. Therefore, Sage Abra Suite fits our "Direct Client/Business Use" category.

BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS:
Abra opens into a very well-designed main interface that offers general system guidance in the work area of the home screen, including new features, Help, support access, training options and user guides. Payroll and HR functions are available via drop-down menus for actions, processes, analysis, reports, rules, details, queries and Help. Expandable menus are also available for many key tasks, with text-based links in categories for employee management, time off functions, payroll processing, training, reports, setup and system utilities.

When working within a program area, the main work space offers intuitive data-

we've categorized it as a system that would most likely be used in-house by an employer), Abra does offer the ability to manage multiple employer entities and can be used to manage and pay any number of employees of any pay types, and any number of payrolls for each organization based upon frequency or departmental groupings. Batch processing functions include the ability to run mul-tiple payrolls and report sets simultaneously. Unlimited standard and custom deductions can be assigned, including garnishments, insurance, retirement and third-party payments.

Any number of users can work within Abra concurrently, and the system includes management approvals processes that streamline time-sheet and expense entry review. Pricing for Abra depends upon the number of users and add-on features.

The system includes tax tables and compliance capabilities for all U.S. jurisdictions, including states and local governments, as well as simplified management of employees with multiple state tax obligations. Direct Deposit files are auto-matically created by the program, with the ability to disburse funds to up to four accounts per employee. Abra's benefits management capabilities are outstanding, with complete support for 401(k) and other deferred savings plans with company contributions, as well as HSAs, debit-based flexible spending accounts, insurance, employee training, attendance and other HR-oriented features. This includes full tracking of information required by FMLA, EEO, OSHA and COBRA.

REPORTING & MONITORING:

Abra includes exceptional automated alert functions for tracking due dates of any kind, such as compliance deadlines and payroll approvals processes. And the program offers payroll wage and hire reporting forms for all federal and state entities. Reports and forms are signature-ready, and the program produces magnetic media for electronically filing to states and federal entities. Additional

automated e-filing and payment services are also offered through Sage's

Abra Payroll seamlessly integrates with the HR features offered by Sage, as well as offering integration with Sage accounting systems and offering export to other accounting packages. Time data can be imported from outside clock systems, or businesses can utilize the add-on employee time sheet entry functions, with data flowing into the system following in-house approvals processes.

HELP/SUPPORT:

The Sage Abra system includes numerous built-in support options, starting with quick access to assistance tools, guides, support and other options from the default work screen. The customer can download tax table and system updates as they become available. Online support options include a solutions center with knowledgebase, user forums, newsletters, file and form libraries, and incident tracking. Live telephone-based support is included with system pricing, with priority support and additional options available via subscription models.

CLIENT SELF-SERVICE FEATURES:

The program is designed to be set up across a corporate server, with employees and managers logging in to enter time data and perform self-service HR functions such as submitting time-off requests, changing personal information and checking prior pay stubs, W-2s, W-4s, and benefits enrollment and management. It also handles benefits enrollment and administration so employees can access benefit plans 24/7. The system also has the ability to reflect corporate branding elements on intranet-style screens. Additional features of the self-service portal include ViewBuilder, which lets users build dashboards and reports that are always up-to-date
and accessible via a URL, and integrated in iGoogle, Excel (for further analysis), on an iPad, iPhone, BlackBerry or other intelligent device.

SUMMARY & PRICING

Accountants Network (see www.sageaccountantsnetwork.com for more information on this option).

2010 OVERALL RATING:

Payroll

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