

Human Resource Executive®

Cream of the Crop

The editors of *Human Resource Executive*® list their choices for the top HR and training products of 2005.

Once again, the editors of Human Resource Executive® have chosen 10 HR products and five training products that they believe represent the very best of what vendors introduced to the market during the period of July 2004 to July 2005. Out of the 100-plus entries received this year, we narrowed down our selections by judging each one on innovation, the value it adds to the HR function and its user-friendliness. We also consulted with industry experts to determine just how original the products are. In the end, the products we chose (the overwhelming majority of them are technology-based, in keeping with the trends of recent years) exemplify the smart use of the Web to streamline the workflow involved in everyday processes such as benefits enrollment and new-employee orientation. In all cases, the editors feel strongly these products deliver value to HR professionals, but stress the importance of conducting the necessary due diligence before making investments.

Top HR Product

Sage Abra Workforce Connections

Sage Software, St.Petersburg, FL

What It Is: Abra Workforce Connections is a new Web-based application bundled into Sage Software's Abra HRMS, which is focused squarely on small and mid-market organizations (starting with 75 employees). Abra Workforce Connections has two main components: Abra ESS (employee self-service) and Abra Benefits Enrollment. Abra Workforce Connections offers a central online location for employees, managers and administrators to view and manage important personal and company information, as well as process payroll requests. Abra Workforce Connections automates HR and payroll processes, and provides employees with secure access to personal information from any Internet connection. Abra Workforce Connections is priced at \$1,300 for a 75-employee ESS or Benefits module. And yes, you can buy them separately, if you only need one.

Why We Like It: Sage Software (formerly called Best Software) has always ranked among the leaders serving the small and mid-market HRMS vertical. For Abra Workforce Connections, the keyword is "easy." It's easy to configure, requiring little or no technical skills by the HR staff. Abra Workforce Connections works via modular functionality, offers affordable pricing and has low technical infrastructure requirements. HR users also can easily define approval and notification workflows, document links and Web sites, menus, text, logos and colors with zero programming skills. It's got a clean, simple interface (for HR users and employees as well), and plenty of user-friendly navigational features, including "slide-out" menus and assignable usage "roles" (employee, manager, benefits admin., etc.). In addition, Abra Workforce Connections is one of the first mid-market employee self-service products based on Microsoft's .NET framework, which means it can offer a highly flexible application infrastructure (for example, it supports several different database products) and also is extremely secure. For years, high-level ESS and benefits enrollment was only available to the large enterprise market (companies with at least 5,000 or more employees). However, with Abra Workforce Connections, even the little guys can get the same ESS functionality and efficiency (and less calls to HR, too) as the big boys.

www.sagesoftware.com

