



# STAR-INFO

Newsletter for Sage Abra HRMS

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## Headline News

On December 21, 2009, President Obama signed new legislation extending federal COBRA health coverage cost subsidies for six additional months, for a total of 15 months of subsidized coverage. The legislation also extends the qualifying event deadline to February 28, 2010. To read the full article on the Department of Labor Web site [click here](#).

## Sage Abra Employee Self Service

### Employee Access To Their Own HR And Payroll Information Results In Significant Productivity Gains

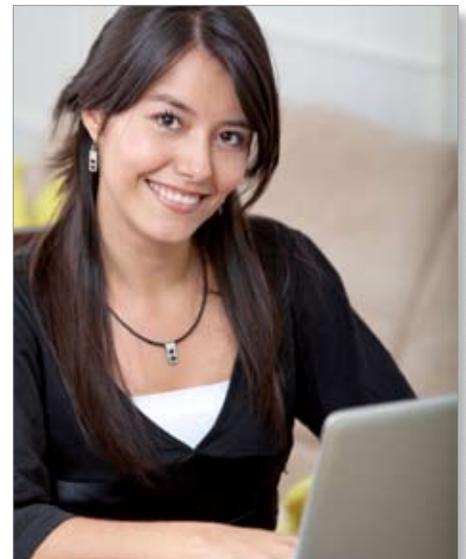
In the current economic climate, most organizations are looking for ways to reduce costs. An excellent cost-saving option is employee self service. A self-service system can reduce the amount of paper documentation needed and save money by significantly reducing administrative overhead for human resource and department managers alike. Here we take a look at the Employee Self Service module that is available for Sage Abra HRMS and Sage Abra Suite, U.S. edition.

#### Employee Self Service Benefits

Employee self-service (ESS) programs have gained momentum as Web portals and other Internet-based software programs have become more secure and easier to deploy. ESS uses technology to reduce administrative costs while providing better service to employees. Companies that have deployed self-service tools enjoy improved data accuracy, reduced costs, and greater work efficiency. In one study, 61 percent of HR professionals surveyed reported a reduction of 50 percent in time spent on administrative tasks.

#### Employee Self Service

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. With workflow capabilities and customizable features, ESS provides a central location for employees, managers, and administrators to



view and manage personal data and company information. Instead of calling the HR department with routine inquiries, employees and managers can access information ranging from accrued time off and current benefits to current job performance standards and training history using the Internet or company intranet. Changes made in the system are communicated automatically to all relevant parties. Features such as password protection and SQL server database security ensure that sensitive employee data remains secure. Abra ESS also supports 128-bit SSL encryption to protect data transmitted over the Internet. And with Abra ESS, your organization will generate a lot less printed matter, not only saving costs associated with paper and printer ink, but also making your company greener.

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## Sage Abra Employee Self Service

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### Employees Manage Personal Information

Employees can access an extensive selection of their own HR information. They can view and edit their information such as emergency contacts, education, and medical conditions. They can check insurance benefits, including employee premium costs, employer contributions, beneficiaries, and dependent information. They can view job-related information such as skills, events, current job, employment history, and performance reviews.

Employees also have access to full paycheck details, payroll deductions, and tax withholding information as well as their salary history. They can view and print their own pay stubs and W-2 forms. They can submit a new W-4 form to change their federal withholding elections. The approval process for the change is automated (Abra Suite – U.S. edition only), resulting in faster approvals and less paperwork. A digital signature feature keeps this process secure and paperless.

### Management Workflow

Managers have instant access to comprehensive employee data for both direct and indirect reports. They can review attendance information, employee performance, training history, and salary history. Managers can access emergency contacts, skills, events, and certifications. They also can view and post employee notes, view birthday lists, and review and approve time-off requests.

With Abra ESS, managing time off is greatly simplified. Employees can view time-off balances, available attendance plans, and absence transactions. They can request time off, and edit or delete time-off requests. Managers and supervisors are notified automatically of pending requests, and can review and approve requests easily.

With the organizational drill-down feature,

managers quickly can locate personnel information on any employee within that manager's organizational chart. Abra ESS includes a role that permits supervisors to view and approve time-off requests, without seeing other sensitive employee information. The system can be configured to send reminders of upcoming employee birthdays as well.

### Customizable

Abra ESS includes customization tools that allow you to tailor the system to suit your needs and create a central portal for employees to access important company information. Web pages can be customized to match your corporate look, including logos and color schemes. You can define URL links to other Web sites such as benefit providers and Abra Timesheet. You also can post company documents such as employee handbooks, organization charts, and performance review forms.

Abra ESS automates business processes with flexible workflow features. These include optional separate workflows for HR, Payroll, Training, and Benefits Administrators, and the ability for managers to delegate approval rights. Flexible notifications and assignment settings allow your organization to significantly improve business processes.

### Abra Train

When using Abra Train, you can allow employees to view training course catalogs and request enrollment in training classes through Abra ESS. The notification and approval process can be automated so that managers are notified of requests and can approve them.

### Integration

Full integration means that once changes are submitted and approved by the appropriate administrator, they are automatically updated in the Sage Abra database. Note

that HR and benefits features require the Abra HR module, Payroll features require the Abra Payroll module, and time-off management features require the Abra Attendance module.



The Employee Self Service Web Portal is fully customizable to meet your organization's needs.

### Return On Investment

In addition to a comprehensive range of features, Abra ESS delivers time and cost savings with a proven return on investment. By automating employee activities such as time-off requests and dependent and beneficiary changes, companies can save considerable administrative time and expense associated with paper forms and manual processes. Plus, studies have shown that readily available company information can significantly improve employee morale and retention. Abra ESS can positively impact your company's bottom line by allowing HR staff more time to focus on strategic business issues such as employee development, effective recruiting programs, and competitive compensation plans.

Give us a call to discuss the implementation of ESS for your organization. ✨

# New Rules For HIPAA Compliance

**D**id you know that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included new rules for protecting the privacy and security of employee health information? A portion of the bill, called the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), sets out some new rules. Here is an overview.

In 1996, Congress enacted HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), which requires group health plans to furnish a statement of the individual's prior creditable health coverage when an individual loses coverage under the plan. At that time, the Department of Labor issued a model statement for employers to use to comply with the Act's employee notification requirements. This statement is incorporated into the notification form produced by the Sage Abra HR module.

## New Rules Added

The HITECH Act adds additional complexity to HIPAA compliance for employers. Employers now face the risk of more penalties if employee private health information (PHI) is not properly maintained and secured. The majority of the new regulations surround the proper procedures if a breach of privacy has occurred:

- » Employers with self-insured groups must now notify individual enrollees if a breach occurs with their PHI. Notifications must be made within 60 days.
  - » If a breach involves more than 500 people, the health plan must alert the media and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
  - » Some organizations may need to collect signed Business Associate agreements from partners or vendors that have access to employee PHI.
- Along with these new notification



requirements, the HITECH Act also adds possible penalties. If the HIPAA or HITECH Act security provisions are violated due to willful neglect, penalties of \$50,000 per violation may be assessed, with a maximum fine of \$1.5 million per year. Several HIPAA compliance documents, including the Notice of Privacy Practices, need to be updated to reflect the new rules.

## Act Now

The Department of Health and Human Services published its interim final rule in the Federal Register on August 24, 2009 and the publication of this rule implemented the HITECH Act. Notifications are mandatory for any breaches occurring on or after September 23, 2009.

Here are some steps you can take to make sure your organization remains in compliance with the HIPAA and HITECH Acts:

- » Ensure your compliance documents are updated, including the Sage Abra HR Certificate of Coverage report showing proof of previous health insurance.
- » Ensure access to employee Personal Health

Information (for example, Web access through the Sage Abra Employee Self Service module) is properly secured with strong passwords and data encryption.

- » Contact third-party administrators and benefit providers to verify the measures taken and the persons responsible for the security of your employees' PHI.
- » Document the steps necessary to identify a potential breach of security.
- » Document the steps you will need to take in order to ensure the proper notifications are made in the event of a breach of PHI security.

Please give us a call with your questions. ✨

## (( Tips & Tricks ))

### How To Change An Employee Last Name

The most common reason to change an employee's last name is when an employee gets married.

1. From the Activity Center, select Human Resources (or Payroll), Actions, Change Personal Status.
2. Locate the employee who needs the last name changed. A box entitled, *Steps for Change Personal Status Task* should display. Place a check mark in the *Complete for Marital Status/Address Change* box and click *OK*. The Marital Status/Address Change action panel will display.
3. Click the Personal tab, locate the last name and change it. Click Apply and then OK.
4. If employee's name is changing due to marriage, also select the appropriate Marital Status from the drop-down list.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

### Sage Abra SQL HRMS Version 10

Sage Abra SQL HRMS Version 10 includes a completely updated user interface and dynamic information sharing. The release is included with Abra SupportPlus membership. Let's learn more.

#### New User Interface

When you first login to Sage Abra SQL HRMS Version 10, a new welcome page displays. It provides a central location where you can click links to review What's New in Sage Abra SQL HRMS, access the online Help system, access Guides, contact Support, and provide feedback.

The new Desktop has been designed for intuitive ease of use, based on a usability study among Sage Abra users. HR and payroll professionals can accomplish tasks and find the information they need quickly and easily with the new task organization, terminology, and process workflow. Here we provide some highlights of the new user interface.

#### Desktop

The Desktop is organized into distinct areas. The Navigation Pane is a list of groups that displays on the left-hand side of the page. Clicking on a group in the Navigation Pane expands it to display its subgroups. For example, if you click to expand the Employees group, it displays the Tasks and Processes subgroups. The Tasks subgroup lists all employee-related tasks such as Add New Hire, Change Job, and Terminate Employee.

The Navigation Pane replaces the Activity Center as the alternative to using the Main Menu for navigation.

A new visual tool, the Payroll Process Map, has been added to assist with payroll workflow. It is accessed from the Navigation Pane by selecting Payroll > Process Payroll.

To find employee records more easily, you now can search by first name, as well as view the number of records found based on your search criteria. Additional columns are available in the search results by clicking the More Options button, including Organization levels, Status, State, Type, and Salaried/Hourly.

Other areas of the Desktop are the Main Menu, the Employee Toolbar, the Workspace, and the Status bar. The Employee Toolbar displays below the Main Menu when you select Employee > View/Edit Employees. Several tabs contain toolbar buttons that provide you with quick access to employee detail pages.

#### Dynamic Information Sharing

If you are using the Employee Self Service (ESS) module, the new View Builder allows you to dynamically and securely share workforce information via a Web link. This capability empowers HR to share Abra data with executives. Workforce data is displayed in graphical views that managers can use for decision support. Information is automatically filtered for each recipient according to their Abra role.

#### Product Feedback Option

The new Product Feedback option is available from the Help Menu. Here you can submit ideas about how Sage can improve the product, compare your ideas with other ideas that were submitted, rate the importance of ideas, and track the ideas you submit.

If you use Sage Abra Suite and like the sound of these new features, you will be glad to know that an Abra Suite upgrade containing these same capabilities is expected in Spring 2010. Call us with your questions. ✨

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