



# STAR-INFO

Newsletter for Sage Abra HRMS

November 2009 • Volume 7 • Issue 4

## What's Inside

### Page 2

What's New In Sage Abra Suite Version 7.8 CONTINUED

### Page 3

Smooth Year-End Processing With Future-Dated Benefit Plans

### Page 4

Sage Abra OrgPlus Professional

## Headline News

It is up to Human Resources to ensure that hiring, discipline, and termination practices are compliant with the law. Mistakes can be costly. Over one-third of private companies surveyed by Chubb Insurance had experienced an employment-law event (EEOC charge filed, or employee lawsuit), at an average cost of \$74,400 per incident. Sage Abra HR helps you stay on top of government regulations.

## What's New In Sage Abra Suite Version 7.8

A major concern in the current business environment is identity theft. In addition to customer-requested enhancements, and enhancements to help you comply with government reporting requirements, Sage Abra Suite Version 7.8 adds new capabilities to protect confidential employee information. Let's take a closer look.

### Protecting Employee Information

Robust new features in Sage Abra HR and Abra Workforce Connections (AWC) have been designed to protect employees' private information.

In HR, the salary and job information on the Job History screen now is secured so that only authorized employees can access this information. Additionally, when an employee record is updated with new supervisor information, the e-mail address of the supervisor is automatically updated. This assures the correct supervisor will receive automated e-mail messages regarding changes to the employee's status.

AWC is a powerful tool that allows employees to manage their personal information themselves. Because AWC is browser based, it is especially important to make sure private information is fully protected. A number of new features are added in Version 7.8 to help ensure the security of this information.

In order for a user to create a login to Employee Self Service (ESS), they must enter their social security number. This field now is



fully masked, similar to a password field. In other words, as the employee types in their social security number, only asterisks will display to show the system has recognized a keystroke. Similarly, when employees are viewing their information in ESS, the social security number (or social insurance number in Canada) is hidden to protect the information from being viewed by others when computers are used in open areas.

For organizations that run more than one company in Sage Abra Suite, Self Authentication now includes the ability to select the correct company for employees with information in more than one company.

In addition, password protection is stronger in Version 7.8. If administrators are concerned about a possible security breach, or they want users to periodically update

*(continued on page 2)*

## What's New In Sage Abra Suite Version 7.8

(continued from cover)

password information, they can reset passwords and require users to re-authenticate themselves. Similarly, employees now can choose to change their ESS password securely using a new Change or Reset Password page.

Other security enhancements to ESS include the updating of back-end security of the ESS Web site to ensure secure connections. When setting up Windows connection services, you can choose Data Only, Web Only, or both Web and Data services. Additionally, an employee is automatically restricted from typing in a URL to access pages they are not specifically authorized to see.

### Reporting Compliance

A benefit of using Sage Abra Suite is that Sage keeps track of new government reporting requirements and updates the software to incorporate the changes. With Version 7.8, Sage Abra HR includes the Vets 100A report in both summary and detail. You select the reports from the EEO Reports dialog box.

### Workflow Automation

Workflow automation enhancements are added to improve the flow of data between Benefits Enrollment and other modules. Changes made in Benefits Enrollment now will automatically update deductions for benefit premiums in Sage Abra Payroll. An employee can cancel a benefit in ESS and it will trigger the stop of the deduction in Payroll automatically.

The ability to automatically trigger notifications using Sage Abra Alerts also is enhanced. Now changes made to Benefits Enrollment in ESS, OE, and e-Recruiter can trigger an e-mail notification. This enhancement requires Sage Abra Alerts Version 5.1. With Version 5.1, Alerts also can be triggered from both FoxPro and SQL databases.

### New Paycheck Printing Options

With Sage Abra Payroll Version 7.8, the ability to print on blank check stock has been enhanced. The printed checks are ANSI compliant. A MICR font is included and you can control the placement of MICR fields such as signatures, dates, and currency symbols.

There are many fields available for printing checks in Payroll, but chances are you don't need or want all of them to print. An enhanced screen makes it easy to deselect the fields you don't need by checking the box in the *Suppress* column.

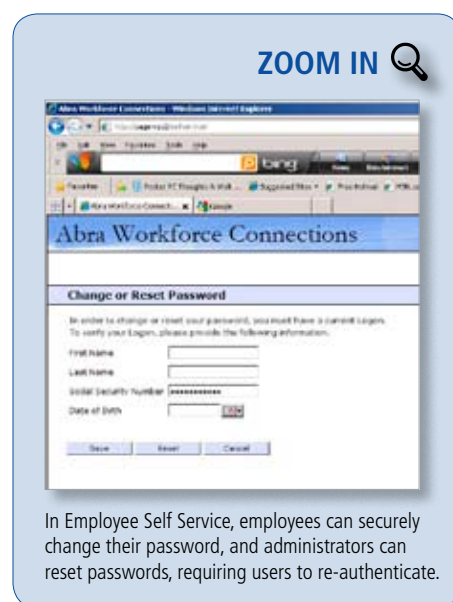
### Customer-Requested Enhancements

A number of enhancements have been made in Version 7.8 that are based on customer requests. Here are some highlights.

- » Benefit History now preserves historical values, so that changes to benefits no longer update historical coverage amounts.
- » HSA Earning now populates Box 12 code W on the W-2 form.
- » In Sage Abra Attendance, the maximum available field now will be enforced. It will be set to 99999.99 if no maximum is entered.
- » The Abra Link updates Job History with prior data.
- » User Defined Codes receive sorting and architecture improvements to flow better through the system.
- » In ESS, the e-mail address is changed to a user-definable field for greater flexibility.
- » In e-Recruiter, questions regarding an applicant's gender, citizenship, etc. now can be removed from applicant screens.
- » Abra OrgPlus receives an update.

### Ideascope — Send Sage Your Ideas

To make it even easier for Sage Abra users to provide Sage with valuable product feedback, built-in functionality now allows you to send your thoughts directly to the Sage Abra product development team.



When you install Version 7.8, you will find a Product Feedback option on the Help menu. It is a built-in method for reporting your ideas to improve the software, directly to Sage. It gives you an easy way to submit your ideas as you think of them, and it also allows you to view the status of existing submissions.

Give us a call for assistance with Sage Abra Suite Version 7.8. ✨

# Smooth Year-End Processing With Future-Dated Benefit Plans

If yours is like most organizations, your benefits open-enrollment period closes 30 to 60 days before the employees' new enrollment selections become effective. For example, if your benefit year runs from January 1 through December 31, open enrollment might run from November 15 through November 30. While the new benefit plans and benefit elections are not effective until January 1, you can set them up in advance; this allows you to transition smoothly into the new year. In this article, we review how you can accomplish this in Sage Abra Suite without impacting the current benefit plans and the employees' current benefit payroll deductions.

## Future-Dated Benefit Plans

Sage Abra Suite gives you the ability to set up future-dated benefit plans; you can enter new plan information any time following open enrollment. The future-dated benefit plans do not affect the current plans or the current payroll deduction. Keep in mind that when your Abra HR software is integrated with Abra Payroll (or any other payroll application), there are additional steps necessary after you have created the future-dated benefit plans. You must link the benefit plans to their associated payroll deductions. The key to managing future-dated benefits when integrated with payroll is that you should link future benefits to payroll deductions only at the appropriate time in your payroll processing. The process boils down to four main steps.

### 1. Set Up The Future-Dated Benefit Plan

Even if your benefit plans do not change from year to year, create a new plan for each plan that will become effective in the new benefit year. Remember to set the date range for the future benefit period (for example,

1/1/2010-12/31/2010). By doing this the current plan information will remain as is, so it can be used for historical purposes.

Before you set up the plan, determine whether it will require a new rate table to calculate the new amounts. If so, add the new rate table before you start setting up the new plan. To simplify the process, you can create a new insurance or savings benefit plan by copying from an existing plan. You can then use all the settings from an existing plan and simply change the few items you need to for the new plan. Remember that insurance and savings benefit plans are set up separately, but the steps are basically the same.

### 2. Add The New Benefit Plan To The Eligible Employees

There are three ways to add the new plan to employees. You can add them one at a time using each employee's benefit insurance plan page, all at once using the Automatically Add To Eligible Employees feature and the Update Benefits process, or through the Open Enrollment process in Abra Workforce Connections.

### 3. Link The New Benefit Plan To The Payroll Deduction

This is the most time-sensitive part of the process. Regardless of the application you are using to process payroll, perform this step after the last payroll of the old benefit year and before the first payroll of the new benefit year.

You link the new benefit plan to the payroll deduction associated with that benefit. The next payroll will then pull the correct linked deduction. In Sage Abra Payroll, link the benefit plan to deduction codes as follows:

» From the Activity Center, select *Payroll* >

Be sure the expiration date is correctly set for benefit plans that are ending so the system transitions correctly in the new year.

*Rules > Deduction Codes.* The Deduction Codes page opens.

- » Select the deduction to be linked to a new benefit plan and click *More* to open the *Deduction Codes Detail* page. Click the *Employer Match* tab.
- » From the HR Benefit Code list, select the new benefit plan to link to the deduction and click *OK*.
- » Repeat these steps for each payroll deduction that is to be linked to a new benefit plan.

### 4. Expire The Old Benefit Plan

When the current benefit year ends, you must expire the old benefit plan so the payroll application will not pull the deduction amount associated with the old plan. To do this, access the Insurance Plans Detail screen for the particular plan, and make sure the end date is set correctly, such as 12/31/2009 if your new benefit year begins 1/1/2010. Abra will automatically expire the plans after the end date and start using the new plans set to begin on the first day of the new benefit year.

Give us a call if you need more specific instructions for completing each step. ✨

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Sage Abra OrgPlus Professional

Does everyone in your organization understand your organizational structure, and how their role fits into achieving organizational objectives? If not, we recommend you take a look at Sage Abra OrgPlus Professional, the industry standard organizational charting software that allows you to easily publish your organizational structure. OrgPlus also is an excellent tool if you are planning some organizational restructuring and want to perform a what-if analysis of the restructure.

### Build Charts Quickly

You can build organizational charts quickly by linking to your Sage Abra employee database. The charts handle complex reporting structures with ease. You can create multiple rows under one manager using multi-column chart styles, import pictures of staff members and place them in boxes, and group boxes in your chart by right-clicking on any box. By defining an underlying background page that is common to all chart pages, you can update global changes to your charts from one location. Thirty six pre-defined templates make it easy to create a custom look for your charts, including fill effects such as gradients and textures.

### Flexible Publishing Options

Once your organizational charts are created, you can publish them in Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat PDF, or HTML. You can even post them directly on your company intranet. If you

need to send appropriate sections of your organizational charts to managers, you can define e-mail distribution lists for each organization chart file. When changes occur you can automatically send the new chart, keeping everyone up to date on the latest organizational additions, changes, and open positions.

### Business Planning Capabilities

If organizational restructuring is in the works, OrgPlus has excellent tools for planning and evaluating various scenarios. Managers can formulate scenarios and measure their impact using built-in formulas to measure head count, salaries, and other important planning information. Tree Panel controls allow them to quickly add, delete, and edit records without navigating a cumbersome organizational chart. Simple drag-and-drop controls make it easy to incorporate a mass change. You even can perform spreadsheet functions on data in chart boxes and insert links to other files.

A Merge Charts feature allows you to merge two organizational plans into a single chart automatically. It marks the records that have been changed and the author responsible for making the change. You can annotate your charts with comments and add notes that relate to a box, branch, or your entire chart. Share your charts with comments freely using OrgPlus Reader. Using this tool, company reorganization charts that used to take days can be done in just minutes.

Sage Abra OrgPlus is available for Sage Abra HRMS Version 8.3 and higher, and Sage

Abra Suite Version 7.6 and higher—U.S. edition. With Sage Abra OrgPlus Professional, employees and managers have easy access to up-to-date organizational charts that give them the information they need to understand your business and plan for the future. Give us a call to discuss implementing OrgPlus in your organization. ★

## Contact Information

**Dresser & Associates, Inc.**  
243 US Route 1  
Scarborough, ME 04074  
Regional Offices Located In:  
Clearwater, FL  
Atlanta, GA  
(866) 885-7212  
(207) 885-0816 fax  
info@dresserassociates.com  
www.dresserassociates.com

