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Headline News

According to the latest Manpower Inc. employment outlook survey, U.S. employers are taking a stable, yet cautious approach to fourth quarter hiring.

Of the 1,400, employers surveyed, 27% expect to increase their workforce, 9% say they will cut their payrolls, 58% expect no change, and 6% are undecided about their hiring plans for the quarter.

Upcoming Training Events

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Automating Benefits Management

The open enrollment process for employee benefits can be a confusing time for employees and an administrative headache for employers. Trying to complete this process manually involves significant time and reams of paper. You first must distribute benefit information to all your employees, get employees to fill out and return the benefit forms, enter this information manually from handwritten forms, correct any errors, and then compile the information in the formats required by your benefit providers. If you're still managing your company's benefit programs using paper forms, it's time to explore the efficiency gains afforded with an online solution.

The Sage Abra HRMS Benefits Enrollment module automates the benefit enrollment process, saving countless hours of redundant data entry and paperwork by allowing employees to make their benefit elections online. Combine Sage Abra Benefits Enrollment with the new Sage Abra Benefits Messenger tool, and you can completely automate your company's benefits management process.

Let's take a look at the features and benefits of an electronic, self-service benefits enrollment solution.

Sage Abra Benefits Enrollment

Sage Abra Benefits Enrollment provides a single location where employees can go to gather all the important information regarding their benefits package. Employees can access Abra Benefits Enrollment over the Internet or through your company intranet. You may include URL links

to benefit provider Web sites and post your company's plan documents for employees to review online.

During the open enrollment process, employees can easily compare current benefit elections with alternative benefit plans, to make decisions that best suit their needs. Furthermore, the anytime access via the Internet allows employees to view this information at home, making it easier to involve spouses when making elective benefit decisions.



With the Benefits Enrollment module you can reduce paperwork and redundant data entry in your benefits enrollment process.

Easy To Use

The Abra Benefits Enrollment module is easy to use. It's so straightforward and intuitive that it requires little or no employee training. With familiar Internet browser technology and easy-to-use wizards, employees are guided through the benefits enrollment process. Employees are prompted to choose plans based on their eligi-

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bility criteria, and can even save their progress and return later. Any errors are automatically flagged, so administrators can ask an employee to make specific corrections. When selections are complete, employees can approve their changes with digital signatures.

Easy To Administer

Just as Abra Benefits Enrollment is easy for your employees to use, it's also easy to set up and administer. Your core benefit definitions from the Sage Abra HR module automatically flow into Abra Benefits Enrollment. Friendly set-up wizards in Abra Benefits Enrollment then make it simple for administrators to specify the additional information required to automate enrollment, such as open enrollment start and end dates, benefit providers, benefit plan groupings, and so on.

Abra Benefits Enrollment even supports multiple open enrollment periods for different eligibility groups—if for example you have a different schedule of benefits for hourly employees than your salaried staff. Employees will be able to choose only from the plans available to them based on the criteria you set up.

Monitor Progress

When employees need a reminder to complete enrollment, you can send customizable e-mail reminder messages to employees. Abra Benefits Enrollment makes it easy to monitor employees' progress, ensuring all eligible employees participate. Errors are automatically flagged, allowing you to request that the employee make the appropriate changes.

Not Just For Open Enrollment

Abra Benefits Enrollment keeps working throughout the year. In addition to using it during the open enrollment period, both employees and their managers can add or update dependent information, change marital status, or change dependent status at any time throughout the year as the result of a qualifying life event.

Sage Abra Benefits Messenger

There's now another aspect of benefits enrollment that your Sage Abra solution can help automate. Once you've gathered all your

employees' benefit data, you need to send that data to your benefit providers. Rather than submitting paper forms, or spending hours creating and maintaining customized electronic file formats for each carrier, consider a new tool, Sage Abra Benefits Messenger.

Streamline Carrier Communication

Abra Benefits Messenger automatically extracts the benefits data from your Abra HR database, reformats it to meet the specific requirements of each benefit carrier, and then securely transmits it to the carriers over the Internet. When it's this easy to communicate with your carriers, you'll gain the flexibility to switch carriers when you need to, allowing you to find the most cost-effective insurance plans for your company.

Minimize Errors

Because Abra Benefits Messenger automatically extracts employee enrollment data from the Abra HR database, you eliminate data entry errors. And Abra Benefits Messenger saves you money by ensuring that you are not paying for terminated or ineligible employees.

Broad Carrier Support

Abra Benefits Messenger supports virtually all insurance plan carriers in the United States and Canada, including health, dental, vision, life, disability, and other types of benefit plan providers including 401(k). A full listing of supported carriers is available, call us for a copy.

Secure Data

Once you install the Abra Benefits Messenger utility, the only other thing you'll need before you can begin using it is an Internet connection. Abra Benefits Messenger ensures your sensitive employee benefits data is secure. Data is protected with secure FTP (SFTP) and secure socket layer (SSL) Internet security protocols, PGP encryption standards, and authentication certificates.

Reap The Benefits Of Automating Benefits Management

Control Rising Costs

According to a Hewitt Associates Inc. study, costs to employers for health plan coverage are expected to rise by an average of 8.7 percent in 2008. Adding to the costs of health care insur-

ance and other benefits, are the less easily quantifiable, but significant, costs of time spent in the open enrollment process by HR professionals and employees.

Using Sage Abra as your end-to-end benefits enrollment and management solution, you can reduce your administrative costs. You empower your employees with information and tools to: update their records with changes such as name, address, or dependent information; and to research questions they may have about their benefits package.

The entire enrollment process can be monitored electronically, making it much more likely to be completed correctly and on time, with much less administrative labor required. As a result, your company benefits from tremendous savings in overhead and labor costs.

Speed Up The Process

You can significantly reduce time delays due to manual processing by having employees enter their own benefit elections. When the data entry is complete and approved you can then update the Abra HR module with the benefit selections. When used with Sage Abra Payroll, benefit deduction changes also are automatically updated with synchronized future start dates, thus eliminating hours of duplicate data entry.

Eliminate Paper Pushing

By using the Abra HR module to set up and track benefit information, Abra Benefits Enrollment for online employee benefits enrollment, and the Abra Benefits Messenger tool to transmit enrollment information to carriers, you can virtually eliminate paper handling throughout the entire enrollment process, resulting in significant labor, paper, and postage cost reductions.

Now is the time to evaluate what you can do to make your benefit enrollment process run more smoothly—it may be one of the best ways to reduce your cost of providing employee benefits. Give us a call with any questions you may have about automating your benefits management process. ☆

Payroll Your Way

Many companies choose to outsource their payroll processing tasks, citing convenience and security as two major bonuses. Companies that prefer to keep this vital function in-house cite flexibility and control as the key benefits. Even those companies processing payroll in house may look outside the company for assistance in filing employer forms and processing tax payments.

The Sage Abra HRMS Payroll module is a powerful, comprehensive tool capable of handling even the most complex multi-state payrolls. Sage Payroll Services, a Web-based outsourced payroll solution accepts data from your Abra HR module, minimizing duplicate data entry while removing the burden of payroll processing. Sage Tax Filing Services handles tax filing tasks, working in conjunction with Abra Payroll.

Whether you choose a completely in-house solution, a fully outsourced solution, or something in between, you'll find that Sage Software gives you the options to process payroll in the way that works best for your organization.

In-House Solution—Abra Payroll

The Abra Payroll module is easy to use. With built-in reports, forms, benefit and deduction processing, calculations specific to state and local tax laws, and convenient quarterly tax updates from Sage Software, you simply need someone familiar with payroll concepts and trained on the software to manage your payroll.

If you elect to perform your own tax filings, the Abra Payroll module helps to ensure that your organization is compliant with the IRS filing requirements. Multi-state payrolls are no trouble for the Abra Payroll module, and each quarter you'll receive updates to maintain your specific tax requirements.

Abra Payroll integrates seamlessly with the rest of your Sage Abra solution, including HR, Attendance, ESS, and Benefits Enrollment, saving you the burden of maintaining employee-related data in multiple locations.

The Abra Payroll module protects key information with sophisticated, multi-level

security. You control which user groups have access to data at any level. An audit trail allows you to identify the user who made each change along with the date, time, and nature of change.

The Abra Payroll module supports Direct Deposit and can handle even the most complex payroll requirements. You can assign an unlimited number of deductions per employee. You can prioritize withholding deductions to handle levies or garnishments.

Outsourced Solution—Sage Payroll Services

Sage Payroll Services is a Web-based payroll service that tightly integrates with the Sage Abra HRMS HR, Attendance, and ESS modules. The employee data you maintain in the HR module can be uploaded into Sage Payroll Services to speed the initial start up and save you the time and expense of data entry. Thereafter, ongoing synchronization of your employee data and benefits data between Sage Abra and Sage Payroll Services ensures your data is always current.

- ▶ Insurance and savings benefits in Abra HR are automatically linked to earnings and deductions in Sage Payroll Services.
- ▶ In Abra Attendance, employee attendance records are automatically linked to Sage Payroll Services, which sends earned, available, and used amounts to payroll accrual plans.
- ▶ Abra HR automatically adds new hires to the Sage Payroll Services database and sets up employee deductions based on employee benefit enrollments.

You can access Sage Payroll Services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, on a secure online network. There are no technical requirements beyond a high-speed Internet connection and desktop PC. Using Abra ESS, employees can view their pay history and even their W-4 information online.

A complete check delivery service is provided, or if you prefer, you can print checks on demand from your desktop. You'll also have

real-time access to dozens of reports providing a detailed view of your company's payroll data. Sage Payroll Services handles your tax reporting, deposits, and filings with federal, state, and local agencies, and provides full W-2 processing.

Hybrid Solution—Sage Tax Filing Service

Perhaps you're comfortable and confident with your ability to process payroll in house, but would like to avoid the hassle and potential liabilities associated with tax filing. Sage Tax Filing Service can be an ideal complement to Abra Payroll, relieving you of the burden of tax reporting, deposits, and filings. You simply upload an electronic file containing your tax data to Sage Tax Filing Services following each payroll cycle. The service also can print and mail your W-2 forms to your employees and file with the IRS via magnetic media.

Most service bureaus impound your payroll tax liabilities during each pay cycle. It's a great deal for the bureaus, because they collect interest on your money until the taxes are due. Sage Tax Filing Services does not impound your tax liabilities. Instead, your payment is electronically routed directly from your bank account to the taxing authority just before or on the tax due date. You keep the money, and the interest on that money, until it's due.

Although the tax processing is outsourced, you'll still remain informed. You'll have the opportunity to verify your tax payments before they are made. Hard copies of every tax return are provided to you for your files. Your state taxes are prepared on a signature-ready return or on your original blank return form. You'll receive same-day confirmation of tax information received by the service.

Whether you choose Sage Abra Payroll as your in-house solution or Sage Payroll Services as your outsourced solution, as a Sage Software Business Partner, we are able to support you. This ensures that your company's software support remains consistent and convenient. Give us a call to discuss your payroll processing options. ☆

Hagel & Company Upcoming Training Events

FREE Webinars

Register online at www.hagel.net/webinars.html

- ▶ Payroll Balancing— Thursday, February 21st, 2008 - 10:00 a.m. PT.
Start the payroll year out right. Balance Payroll every time. Balance your quarters. Have an easy year end for 2008. Length: 45 minutes to 1 hour - FREE
- ▶ eRecruiter— Thursday, May 15th, 2008 - 10:00 a.m. PT.
Discover how easy it can be to create requisitions and post them to the web to get the quality candidates that you need. This webinar will work through the entire eRecruiter process from Requisition creation to hiring the right people for the job. Length: 45 minutes to 1 hour - FREE

Web Training

Register online at www.hagel.net/web-based-training.html

- ▶ Abra Payroll 2007 Year-End Workshops— Class Times: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon Pacific Time, \$199.
 - Thursday, December 6, 2007
 - Thursday, December 13, 2007
 - Thursday, December 20, 2007

Sage Abra HRMS: Planning For Year End

Year-End Closing Documentation

Get a head start on the year-end process by reading through the Sage Abra closing instructions now. You can search for year-end related topics using the *Online Users Guide*, accessible from the Help Toolbar within Sage Abra. In addition, Sage Software's SupportPlus Online Web site (www.sagespecialized.com/support) is updated frequently with the latest information users need concerning year-end processing.

If this is your first time closing Sage Abra, you might consider a Web-based training class, or allowing us to perform some one-on-one training for you and your staff. Remember, you can always call us to help prepare for and perform your year-end processing tasks.

Schedule The Time

The calendar seems to speed up as the end of the year approaches, so don't be caught unprepared. Schedule the date(s) to perform your year-end closing tasks on your calendar and on the calendars of your payroll clerks and HR personnel. Be certain to allow adequate time to complete year-end procedures before the first payroll of the new year is due.

Develop A Work Plan

You should have a detailed, step-by-step plan for year-end procedures. Communicate to employees involved in the process what their individual tasks will be and when they'll be called on to perform them.

Order Government Forms Now

Order your W-2 and 1099 forms now to ensure they're here when you need them. Be sure to order plenty of extras. Many times a mistake is not discovered until you have printed W-2s. It pays to order at least twice the quantity that you expect to print. Be certain you buy a supported form or that you can make any necessary form layout changes.

Double-Check Employee Information

Take the time to enter all address, pay increases, terminations, and W-4 changes into Sage Abra HR and/or Payroll. You'll need this data current for tax reporting in January.



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Back It Up

You know the importance of performing routine backups. Perhaps no other backup is as critical as the final backup you perform before your year-end closing procedures are started. Backing up your Sage Abra data is so simple—don't neglect it. The backup you produce should be kept indefinitely. With Sage Abra, this will mean relabeling that backup file and saving it to another drive location or onto a portable hard drive or CD.

Payroll Tax Updates

Tax table updates are typically available from Sage Software by mid-December. If you have an up-to-date maintenance contract, the update will be sent to you automatically. If your contract has lapsed, please give us a call and we'll get you up to date.

Calling In The Experts

Be certain to call us if you find data corruption or errors while processing or printing reports. We are available to assist in any part of the year-end processing, such as producing W-2s and 1099s and helping you to archive last year's data.

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