Business News England

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

Going digital – The need for speed!

The trend towards paperless office solutions is rapidly increasing, whether it is to improve business efficiency or realise environmental goals. Our most profitable clients have already streamlined their internal procedures and are getting the most out of their teams by going paperless, in a variety of areas.

Below are some ways you can become paperless in your business and examples of the benefits we have seen in our clients.

Storing information using cloud storage

Customer information, contracts, and sensitive employee information are held by most businesses and, if on paper, the risk of data loss is much greater than an online secure portal.

Using a conventional filing system means it can be difficult to limit access to those files to only those who need to know. Once the filing cabinet is unlocked, anyone can go the files, creating a risk of escaping information.

The reality is that saving information on the cloud is the safest place to save sensitive data. Online storage has:

- Constant security updates: Regular and automated updates are carried out by cloud storage providers to ensure their software is updated. Since this happens on the backend, you do not have to worry about updating the system yourself.

- Firewalls: Cloud software is inherently secure against cyberattacks and viruses through its firewalls, which are pre-installed applications that block malicious activity and prevent it from entering.

- Data encryption: Cloud providers encrypt data which means they scramble it and make it unreadable to everybody apart from approved users.

- Two factor authentication: Shutting information behind a two-factor authorisation mechanism, which forces the user to input two pieces of information to access the files, makes it much more difficult for hackers and data miners.

Online payroll software

Eliminating paper payslips and switching to online payroll software can lower administration and give your finance team more time to focus on their critical tasks. An online payroll system can also ease the fear for employees of not being paid on time.

Using a paperless payroll system will:

- Increase security: Online payroll systems are encrypted and password protected.

- Be easier to manage: Modern payroll software automates the payroll process, eliminating the necessity to manually compute tax and national insurance as well as print payslips.

- Most employees notice only minor differences when switching to a paperless payroll system, such as receiving an email notification instead of a letter. Plus, your finance team will have a more secure and manageable system to work with.

Digital receipts when claiming expenses

When claiming expenses, it is often a struggle to remember dates and amounts and keep safe all the paper receipts! You can make everything easier and reduce your paper trail by using digital receipts.

For example, many of our clients use an App on their phone to take a picture of their receipts, which is then automatically processed by the software and posted directly into your accounting software, with a summary being produced for the employee to claim back the expense from the business.

Digital receipts are becoming ever more popular, and they are not only used for sundry expenses. Most retailers now provide eInvoices and, where you still receive paper invoices, you can also use software to scan and digitise them into your accounting software directly.

Online accounting software

Paper always seems to gather and is easily lost, no matter how well organised your filing cabinets are! Cloud-based accounting software can help reduce this problem. The software enables you to process sales, purchases, receipts, and payments without needing to invest in costly infrastructure and the dreaded annual license fee! Most cloud providers charge a reasonable monthly subscription and access to the software for bookkeeping is 24/7, 365.

Just suppose you:

- Took a photo on your phone of a purchase invoice and it was posted automatically;

- Had a system where your bank fed your data directly into your accounts on a DAILY basis; and

- Could see your results, who owes you money, who you owe and your business bank balance 24/7, 365 from your smart phone.

We can help you put in a cloud accounting package and get you:

1. A clear picture of your current financial position, in real time.

2. Putting your books 100% online, so there's no software to install and everything is backed up automatically; and

3. Eliminating upfront accounting software costs – upgrades, maintenance, system, and administration costs are no longer an issue.

Please talk to us about the advantages of a cloud accounting package, you will be amazed what a difference knowing your results in real time makes to your business!

Google AI training for start-ups and small businesses

Google have launched AI (Artificial Intelligence) focused online training for people and businesses to help capture the benefits of AI, whether it's to save time, get a new job, or grow your business.

The modules are packed with practical advice and tips focused on essential AI skills including:

Boost your productivity with AI

This session introduces learners to cutting-edge AI tools that are already available from Google and others, to show some of the smartest ways digital-age workers can use them to save time at work and on tasks. In this session you will learn:

- An introduction to generative AI and how it works;

- How to use AI-powered tools and techniques to save you time; and

- An overview to crafting effective prompts.

See: Boost your productivity with AI (rsvp.withgoogle.com)

Understanding machine learning

Aimed at small business leaders/owners or anyone looking to get a better understanding on the subject, this session covers:

- How different machine learning models work;

- The essentials for preparing data for a machine learning project; and

- Options for implementing machine learning for a business.

See: Understanding machine learning (rsvp.withgoogle.com)

Action Fraud warns of remote access scams

Action Fraud has received over 30 crime reports since June 2023 relating to remote access scams targeting businesses, with victims reporting losses totalling over £3.8 million.

Based on analysis of crime reports by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, Action Fraud advises that scammers will generally use the following tactic to target businesses:

- Contact the victim claiming to be a representative from their bank or from a financial services vendor used by the victim's business.

- Convince the victim to install a piece of software that enables remote access to their computer, claiming that it is required to install an important software update.

- At some point during the call, the victim is instructed to login to their online banking account. Once the victim has done this, the remote access software is used to blur the victim's screen whilst the scammer makes fraudulent transactions from the victim's account without their knowledge.

- The victim is also asked to read out a series of numbers the scammer claims they have sent to the victim's mobile. In reality, the numbers are a one-time verification code from the victim's bank which, if shared with the scammer, will allow them to transfer money out of the victim's bank account.

Some victims reported a slightly different account of how the scam was perpetrated. However, the goal of the scammers usually remains the same – to convince victims to login to their online banking account whilst the scammer has remote access to their computer.

To protect against remote access scams, conduct your business in line with the following advice:

- Never install any remote access software on your device as a result of an unsolicited call, browser pop up, or text message. Your bank will never ask you to grant them remote access to your computer or smartphone.

- Do not share with anyone, not even bank employees, the one-time verification codes sent to you by your bank to authorise transactions on your account.

- If you believe your laptop, PC, tablet or phone has been infected with a virus or some other type of malware, follow the National Cyber Security Centre's guidance on recovering an infected device.

- If you receive a suspicious call from someone claiming to be from your bank, hang up, wait a few minutes, then call your bank using the contact number on the back of your debit card, or use the contact information on their official website or app.

- If your business has fallen victim to fraud or cyber-crime, report it to Action Fraud online or by calling 0300 123 2040. If you are a business, charity or other organisation which is currently suffering a live cyber-attack (in progress), please call 0300 123 2040 immediately.

See: Action Fraud

UK Online Safety Bill

The UK government have published details of the Online Safety Bill.

The Online Safety Bill is a new set of laws to protect children and adults online. It will make social media companies more responsible for their users' safety on their platforms.

Details include:

- A guide to the Online Safety Bill;

- How the online safety bill will protect children;

- How the online safety bill will protect adults;

- Types of content that will be tackled;

- How underage children will be kept off social media platforms;

- How adults will have more control over the content they see;

- How the Bill will tackle repeat offenders;

- How the Bill will be enforced;

- How these UK laws impact international companies; and

- The next steps for the Bill.

See: A guide to the Online Safety Bill - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Find a grant service

Find a grant is a UK government service that allows businesses to search all UK government-funded grants. Businesses can use the website to browse or search for available grants, check if they are eligible, and find out how to apply for each grant.

Anyone can use the UK government Find a grant service to find and apply for grant funding. Each funding opportunity has its own eligibility criteria and scope. There is no cost to use this service.

You can also sign up to get updates about new grants.

See: Home - Find a grant (find-government-grants.service.gov.uk)

HMRC Overlap relief form – Unincorporated businesses

Businesses that are sole traders, partners of trading partnerships, and members of LLPs who pay income tax on the profits of their businesses are subject to the new basis period method of taxation.

For tax year 2024/25, business owners will be subject to a tax year basis of taxation. This means that they will be taxed on profits arising in the tax year concerned, regardless of their accounting date.

Special rules apply for the 2023/24 tax year to help transition non-tax year end businesses from the existing accounting year end method of taxation to a tax year basis. This means that all overlap relief that the business has been carrying forward must be offset against profits in the 2023/24 tax year.

There is a new online form to request overlap information that allows unincorporated businesses to request the information HMRC holds on the available overlap relief that needs to be claimed for the 2023/24 transition year. This form was launched on the 11 September and, given the recent delays experienced by taxpayers trying to call HMRC or get a timely response to letters, it may prove the best option, especially as HMRC state they will have a specialist team involved.

The next HMRC webinars on basis period reform will be held on the 12 September at 3.45pm and 27 September at 11.45am. You can join either of these here: Registration (gotowebinar.com)

Please contact us if you need assistance with changing your accounting year end or understanding the new system as we have expertise in performing the new calculations and advising business owners in this complicated area.

Latest HMRC Employer tax webinars

Listed below are a number of live HMRC webinars that will help employers with payroll. The webinars are free and last around an hour.

Expenses and benefits for your employees - travel
Tue 12 Sep at 11:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - company cars, vans, and fuel
Wed 13 Sep at 1:45pm

Getting payroll information right
Thu 14 Sep at 9:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - trivial benefits
Fri 15 Sep at 11:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - social functions and parties
Wed 20 Sep at 1:45pm

Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay
Thu 21 Sep at 9:45am

Statutory Sick Pay
Fri 22 Sep at 11:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - if your employees have more than one workplace
Mon 9 Oct at 9:45am

[Taxing employees' benefits and expenses through your payroll](#)
Mon 16 Oct at 11:45am

[Employer filing obligations](#)
Tue 17 Oct at 9:45am

National Work Life Week 2023

National Work Life Week 2023 is taking place from 2 October to 6 October.

The week is an opportunity for both employers and employees to focus on well-being at work and work-life balance. Employers can use the week to provide activities for staff, and to showcase their flexible working policies and practices.

See: [National Work Life Week - Working Families](#)

Local areas will be supported to progress onshore windfarms

Onshore wind projects supported by local people will be approved more quickly in England, in new measures being brought forward by the Government.

The Government has now streamlined planning rules, meaning local areas have a greater say in how onshore wind projects should be considered, ultimately resulting in electricity bill savings and increased national energy security.

The measures include broadening the ways that suitable locations can be identified, including by communities, and speeding up the process of allocating sites by giving alternatives to the local plan process. This will ensure the whole community has a

say, not just a small number of objectors – paving the way for more onshore wind projects to come online where they have community support.

This will mean local policy on onshore wind continues to be decided by elected local councillors, accountable to local people, and plans are taken forward where they can demonstrate local support and address planning impacts identified by the community.

Communities backing local wind farms could also benefit from cheaper energy under proposals to incentivise more projects. The Government has consulted on proposals for improved benefits and rewards for communities backing onshore wind farms and will set out the next steps this Autumn.

See: Local areas supported to progress onshore windfarms - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)