

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR AUTO ENROLMENT?

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The workplace pension reform was introduced in October 2012 in response to difficulties arising from increased life expectancy and low pension savings. The initiative requires employers to automatically enrol eligible workers into a qualifying pension scheme and is being introduced on a staged basis according to business size.

According to the initiative, eligible employees must be automatically enrolled into a pension scheme which both the employee and employer contribute to. Workers who are not eligible for automatic enrolment must be enrolled should their status change. Each qualifying pension scheme must meet minimum standards in respect of the choice of investment fund and the level of contributions made. Employers can choose the pension scheme they use, which could include the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) or other pension plans designed exclusively for smaller businesses.

The staging dates for smaller companies are now with us. Companies with less than 250 employees were affected from 1st April 2014. Between 2014 and 2015, there will be on average over 3,000 companies per month having to comply with auto enrolment (known as staging), with heavy daily fines for missing staging dates from The Pensions Regulator.

Between 2015 and 2017, over 1 million companies will be staging, which is a staggering 51,134 companies per month.

It is vital that you are aware of your duties in order to prepare you for your “staging” date.

Do not leave this until the last minute, or think “it doesn’t affect me” because anyone with a PAYE reference MUST comply and there are serious fines for non-compliance.

Many of our SME clients are looking to implement qualifying plans before their staging date, as they recognise the positive impact that early adoption is likely to have on their workforce. Additionally, early adoption will help to avoid the anticipated deluge of activity around the staging dates and help to control costs by phasing in the contributions.

Please talk to us about Auto Enrolment, we have relationships with specialist Financial Advisers and we can help make compliance as smooth as possible!

FLEXIBLE WORKING TO GET MORE FLEXIBLE FROM JUNE!

New employment rules will mean the right to request flexible working will be extended to all employees with 26 weeks' service from June 30th.

Currently, only employees with children under 17 (or disabled children under 18) and those with responsibilities as carers have a right to request flexible working. Under new measures, however, any employee with 26 weeks' continuous service can ask to work flexibly for any reason, whether it's taking up a further education course, combining work with caring for the grandchildren, or simply wanting to spend less time at work.

Eligible employees will be able to request a change to working hours, working time or work location.

The amended Children and Families Act 2014 removes the prescriptive statutory procedure for dealing with requests, replacing it with a duty on employers to deal with requests in a 'reasonable manner' and to notify employees of their decision within three months, unless an extension is agreed.

More employees will be able to request flexible working but it doesn't mean they have the right to have that request granted. Similar principles are likely to apply when considering requests received and the grounds for refusing remain the same.'

Employers will still be able to reject requests if there are legitimate business reasons for doing so; for example, if it would lead to additional costs for the company, affect its ability to meet customer demand or have a detrimental impact on the company's performance.

The new flexible working rule is one of several 'family-friendly' changes in the pipeline over the next 12 months.

From October 1st 2014 a prospective father or a mother's partner can take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments, while from April 5th 2015 parents of newly born or newly adopted babies, and in some cases a mother and her partner, will be allowed to share a combined total of up to 52 weeks of parental leave and 39 weeks of statutory pay between them.

We have a specialist payroll service that can assist you in the continuing administrative requirements surrounding employment. We would be delighted to discuss these with you.

In a recent survey by small business lender Everline, more than two fifths of UK consumers 'shop local', showing loyalty to three or more small local businesses rather than spending online or with large corporates.

To benefit from and improve local customer loyalty there are three factors to consider:

- Pricing
- Marketing
- Range of products

Being competitively priced is essential if you are competing against the internet sellers and large corporates, most small business owners get this. What's equally important is the level of service that goes with the product and "being different" in the way you deliver that service. A good think about how you add value to the product is a very worthwhile exercise. e.g: For internet sellers delivery is generally fast, often next day, so could you consider matching this for local customers, maybe an order hotline and express delivery?

Letting potential customers know you have the expertise to ensure they make the right buying decision could help persuade them to buy local. Marketing your differentiation from the internet sellers and corporates is going to lead to more trade and giving potential buyers a choice of product will add to your attraction.

FORMS P11D DUE BY 6 JULY

The deadline for filing the 2013/14 returns of benefits and expenses paid to employees is 6 July 2014. Note that there can be significant penalties for incorrect returns so they need to be completed with great care.

The most common benefits in kind that need to be reported are company cars and loans over £5,000 on beneficial terms. Remember that unless the employer holds a dispensation from HMRC employees' and directors' reimbursed expenses, such as travel and subsistence, also need to be reported.

We can assist you in completing the forms and to put in place control procedures that will satisfy HMRC requirements to grant a dispensation from reporting certain expenses.

TAX DIARY OF MAIN EVENTS

<i>Date</i>	<i>What's Due</i>
1 June	Corporation tax for year to 31/8/13
19 June	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/6/14 (due 22 June if you pay electronically)
1 July	Corporation tax for year to 30/9/13
6 July	Forms P11D and P11D(b) for 2013/14 tax year, and where appropriate form P9D.
19 July	PAYE & NIC deductions, and CIS return and tax, for month to 5/6/14 (due 22 June if you pay electronically); payment of Class 1A NICs for 2013/14 (22 July if you pay electronically)

GOOGLE WALLET - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?



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With a full launch of the Google Wallet app due in the UK soon, many businesses are starting to consider how they might use the technology to attract new customers and make life more convenient for existing ones.

So what is it and how does it work?

The technology essentially allows your smartphone to take the place not only of your credit card and/or debit card, but also selected loyalty cards, gift cards, coupons, and more. It has the potential to bring to an end pockets of overflowing loyalty cards that require lots of stamps that eventually allow you to have (for example) a free coffee.

Google Wallet has also been designed to allow users to buy things simply by tapping an NFC-equipped phone on a pay-station. However, with a limited number of manufacturers and shops offering this technology (and the fact that the iPhone doesn't have NFC), it seems that most people aren't familiar enough with its operation to make it seem attractive, or even worthwhile.

Online shopping is where Google Wallet is potentially going to take off. Using the new "Buy with Google" button, users can make purchases online without having to fill in card details and address information; it really is possible to place an order with a single click. Amazon pioneered this method with the appropriately named '1 Click' and this concept is similar. Google Wallet is therefore perfectly placed for busy customers targeted for impulse buys and repeat purchases. However few online retailers are using the required button, making it a relatively niche feature.

It is clear that a lot of thought has gone into the design and implementation of Google Wallet. However, the success or failure of the service will be determined by the ability of Google to build relationships with online retailers, as well as getting more NFC pay points into large retail stores. Google certainly has the financial and technical capability to make this happen and if it does, businesses who adopt the technology should benefit.