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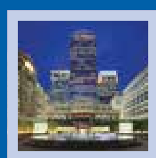

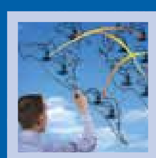

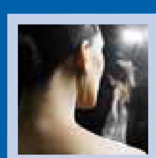

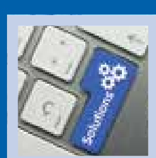

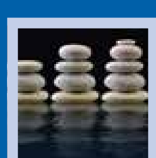

Britain is **Great** for business

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Lee Facey is a partner with Russell Bedford's London firm, Lubbock Fine. He specialises in financial reporting and audits, being responsible for an expanding portfolio of commercial, professional and not-for-profit clients.

As head of the firm's professional services group, Lee advises law firms and other professional practices on a wide range of issues from how best to structure their business to capital funding plans and methods of profit sharing. Additionally, as a member of the charities division, he has extensive knowledge of charity audits, accounting and financial management.

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The UK is one of the most prominent business locations in the world and has the highest level of inward investment in Europe, an endorsement of its business-friendly environment. The UK's open market offers a first-class business infrastructure, a highly skilled labour force, excellent transport links, and much more.

A strong financial sector and low interest rates provide access to funding for both start-ups and established businesses. Banks are widely promoting they are "open for business" and the UK Government is encouraging them to lend.

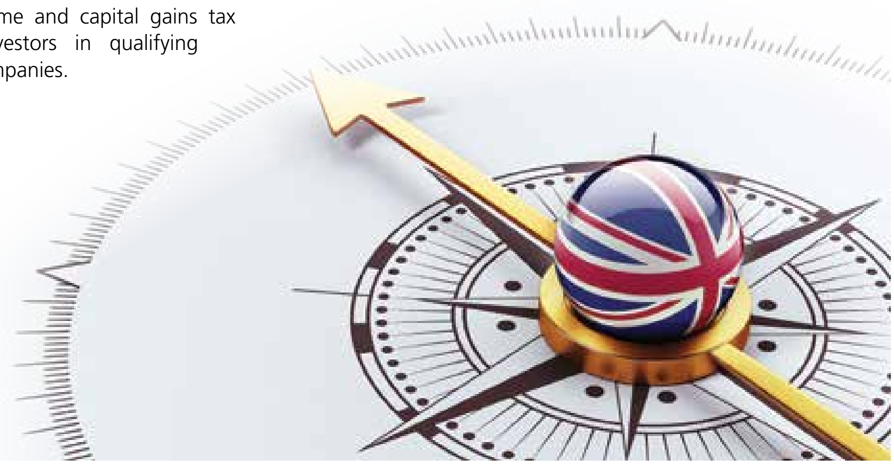
The economic outlook is positive: the UK expects to grow faster in 2014 than any other G7 economy, with capital investment by businesses being a major factor. While the service sectors continue to lead the growth, both manufacturing and construction are also on the up.

The employment market is buoyant with unemployment rates at their lowest since 2008. This, along with a rising property market, has led to increased consumer confidence.

Both consumers and businesses embrace technology, and Tech City – the East London technology cluster – is fast developing into one of the world's leading technology, media and telecoms hubs.

The UK has a proud history of innovation and entrepreneurship. These qualities continue to be encouraged through various tax incentives and reliefs, creating an attractive environment for both businesses and their investors. These include:

- **Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS)** – provides income and capital gains tax relief for investors in qualifying unquoted companies.
- **Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS)** – a junior version of EIS.
- **Substantial shareholder relief** – exempts gains made by qualifying trading companies on disposals of another trading company, where at least a 10% shareholding was held.
- **Entrepreneurs' Relief** – available to individuals on qualifying business assets, including shares in a trading company or group, reducing the capital gains tax rate on the first £10m (a lifetime limit) of gains from a standard rate of 28% to 10%.
- **Research and development (R&D)** – enhanced tax relief, 225% for small and medium-sized companies, available on R&D revenue expenditure.
- **Patent Box** – a reduced 10% corporation tax rate on patented inventions.
- **Annual investment allowance** – provides 100% tax relief in the year of acquisition on qualifying plant and machinery up to an annual limit of currently £500,000.



- **Enterprise zones** – there are currently 24 enterprise zones encouraging new businesses through various incentives.

The UK has an internationally competitive tax regime, and from 2015 it will have a single corporation tax rate of 20%. The UK also has an extensive network of global double-taxation treaties. Further, dividends do not attract withholding tax and generally holding companies do not pay tax on any dividends they receive from both UK and overseas subsidiaries.

There are very few barriers to investing or commencing trade in the UK. There are several business structures, the most common being:

- **Sole trader** – running your own business as an individual with minimal formalities. You have unlimited liability for the businesses debts.

- **Partnership** – running your business with a partner or partners and sharing the profits. Each partner is jointly and severally liable for the debts of the partnership.

- **Limited liability partnership (LLP)** – a separate legal entity, governed by aspects of company law, with limited liability protecting the personal assets of the partners, referred to as members. However, the profits are taxed as if it were a partnership.

- **Private limited company** – a separate legal entity owned by the shareholders with their liability limited to their investment. The company is run by the directors, who are often also the shareholders. All profits belong to the company and are subject to corporation tax. The profits after corporation tax are available for distribution to the shareholders.

- **Public limited company** – the same as a private limited company except the shares can be traded on a stock market. Any company listed on a UK stock market must adhere to the associated rules and requirements, which can be very onerous.

In addition, a representative office or branch establishment are also options suited to a business looking for a minimal presence in the UK. The most appropriate structure will depend on several factors and it is important that you seek professional advice.

The UK's current economic climate, long and successful trading history, solid business infrastructure and promotion of investment and innovation all contribute to making it an attractive proposition to investors and an ideal location to conduct business.

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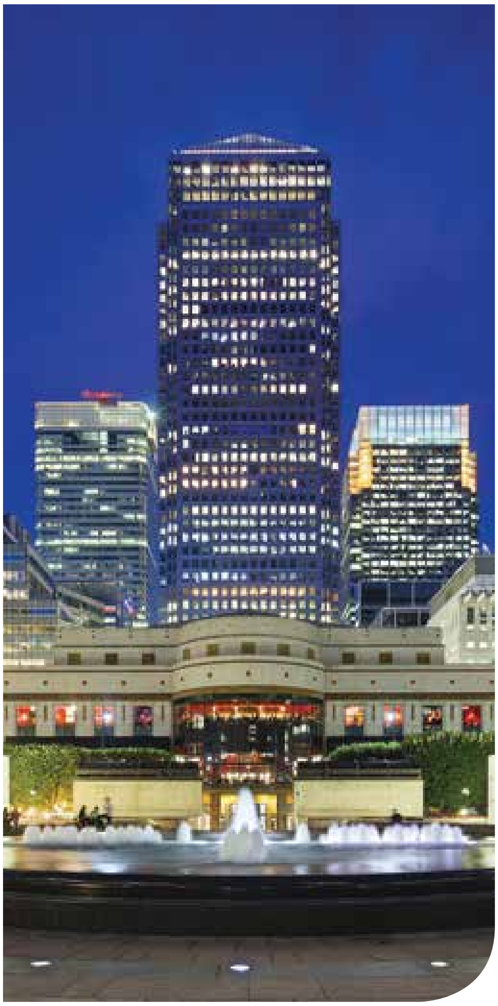

International employment – **avoiding the pitfalls**

The world is a much smaller place than it once was. Technology has globalised business and recruiting overseas is no longer the sole preserve of the multinational corporation. All businesses – SMEs included – may find themselves needing to employ overseas talent.

Planning your first overseas hire

Whenever you hire overseas you must take local differences into consideration. You can't just take a simple job description and make it fit every set of circumstances for the following reasons.

- Different cultures present different challenges. Even when the language is the same there can be big differences in the way people communicate.
- Legal requirements may differ from your home territory.
- The after-hire process is just as important as the hiring process so that you prepare your new recruit for success.
- You need to integrate the various teams in your organisation so they communicate with each other effectively.

Employment status of staff and contractors in multiple countries

Understanding the local legal requirements is essential. Seeking the advice of experts in local employment law will help you avoid many traps by ensuring you are aware of such things as minimum wage requirements, overtime regulations, and employee benefit laws.

Networking with fellow managers in your industry who have a working knowledge of the country in which you are recruiting can also be helpful.

Expat satisfaction, productivity and safety

Relocating to a foreign country is a stressful experience. The more you can do to ease the transition for employees and their families, the sooner they will begin to repay your investment in them.

Communication is key right from the start. Use a questionnaire to find out as much information as possible about their needs, wants and circumstances. Once you have all the information don't just tell them where to look, help them find what they're looking for. There are specialists to whom you can outsource this work if you prefer.

And it doesn't end when they arrive as you must help them integrate into the local culture and community. Language lessons are a must, and training on the local culture and staying safe will all help them to acclimatise.

Challenges and best practices

There are many challenges that you will face when recruiting overseas and some tried and tested methods that you might use.

- Conduct a screening process – depending on the business you are in and the role for which you are recruiting you may choose to screen potential candidates.
- Understand the local culture – what is normal acceptable behaviour in one culture can, for example, be considered rude or arrogant in another.
- Think about your brand – before you can recruit the right person you must first attract the right candidates. Present your company in such a way that you make it attractive to the right talent.

About the author

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Adriana is a Mexican-Canadian human resources global executive with over fifteen years of experience and expertise in recruiting top talent. Adriana has occupied strategic human resource positions throughout her career. She has worked for several multinational companies such as TRW, Eastman Kodak Company, C&A, and Bootlegger. Adriana currently holds the position of Director, Central America for SRI Executive Search as well as running her own recruiting firm specialising in the needs of small and medium enterprises.

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Accounting in the **Cloud**

About the author

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Bruce Saward is the managing partner of Russell Bedford's Melbourne firm, Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants. Over the years Bruce has assumed audit, taxation, business services and IT roles and is a true all-rounder. Much of his time is committed to consulting and strategic business planning which builds upon his diverse experience.

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When looking for a robust and efficient accounting system, most small and medium businesses have chosen a proprietary software package and installed it on a PC or local network. However, improvements in the speed and stability of the Internet have brought online Cloud alternatives to the forefront of accounting technology.

What is the Cloud?

Cloud computing allows you to access remote hardware and software services over the Internet. It also allows you to store data remotely and securely instead of holding data on your local machines.

Cloud accounting offers the same benefits that your local PC-based solution may offer except you access it over the Internet using your web browser. This means you, and others, can access the system anywhere, and at any time.

Advantages of cloud accounting

There are several advantages to cloud accounting systems.

Online collaboration
As long as an Internet connection is available, multiple users, wherever they are, can access your accounting system simultaneously. You can give access to your accountancy advisers too, who can then make online changes to your system. If your business is spread across several locations, cloud accounting makes it much easier to manage your accounting.

Bank feeds
When you download bank transactions a cloud-based system can automatically enter these into the system based on rules you establish, or reconcile these bank transactions with transactions already in your system. This saves time and means you always have an up-to-date view of how your business is doing.

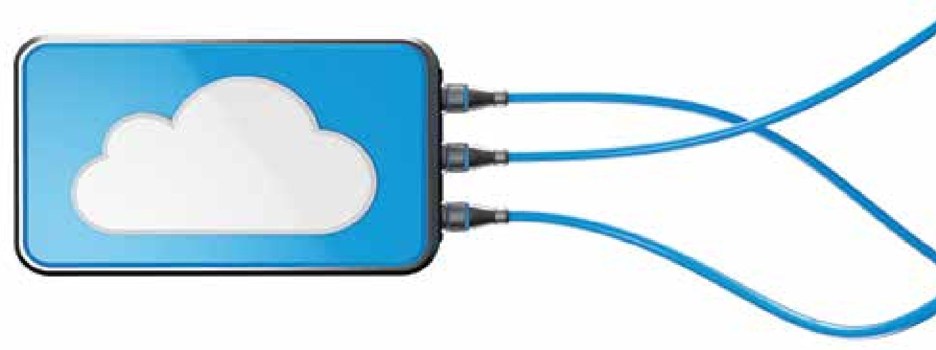
Data capture
This allows you to capture other data, such as supplier invoices, and create transactions in your accounting system. There are various providers who will analyse a scanned or paper copy of a supplier bill and then feed this to the cloud accounting system as a supplier bill transaction with the bill attached. Then you will have a supplier bill as a purchase waiting to be paid with a copy of the bill available to view. This eliminates the need to enter the supplier transaction manually. The list of possible data capture is growing all the time.

Mobility
Most cloud accounting solutions offer smart-phone and tablet applications so that you can generate invoices or quotations on the run. You can also manage basic accounting processes like approvals or accepting matched transactions.

Automatic updates
Your software updates automatically when you log in. This way you know you are always using the current version with up-to-date features.

Add-on modules
Most cloud accounting packages offer a suite of add-ons that allow you to extend the functionality of your system. For example, add-on modules for recording time, costing jobs, inventory, point of sale, and online

Cloud accounting offers the same benefits that your local PC-based solution may offer except you access it over the Internet using your web browser.



trading are available and provide enhanced features and often integrate seamlessly.

Paperless office
A cloud accounting system allows you to send documents and reports electronically.

Different solutions

There are several established solutions and each has its own benefits. The following are popular choices in the Australian SME sector:

- Xero
- Saasu
- MYOB
- Quickbooks online
- Reckon

Pricing

All cloud accounting packages are based on a subscription model. In Australia prices start at around $25 a month but you pay for add-ons separately. Depending on what features you add, the more likely monthly cost is $50 to $100.

Security of data

Data is always backed up so there is virtually no risk of you losing it. If you are comfortable doing your banking online then you should have no concerns about accounting online. However, if you do not trust the security of the Internet then cloud accounting is not for you.

Things to consider

Anything that makes your accounting processes simpler is welcome; for a start it saves you time that you can spend elsewhere in your business.

Before you decide to go cloud-based, and before you choose a package, make sure you do your homework. It is worth you discussing it with your accountancy advisers too. Areas to look at include:

- your volume of transactions
- must-have features versus nice-to-have features
- whether you need inventory capability as this is usually at a basic level with cloud-based accounting
- the speed and stability of your Internet connection.

Once you go cloud-based there's no going back, short of re-entering data into your old system. Therefore, it's important you make the right choice for your business. So seek advice, weigh up the pros and cons of each option, and then make an informed decision.

Case study

Excellent Care Homes operates two care facilities that are about 150 kilometres apart. They have a CEO who commutes between each facility but there is no corporate office. As this made a desktop accounting system problematic for centralised accounting, a cloud accounting system offered the ideal solution.

Each facility scans supplier bills and sends them for approval. They are then emailed to ReceiptBank (an online receipt processing facility) where they are processed and fed back to Xero, the chosen cloud accounting system. Once a week Xero generates a payments file, which is processed through the Excellent Care Homes' online banking. Bank feeds are processed daily according to rules and most payments and receipts are automatically allocated to the correct ledger account. Very little data is actually entered despite there being around 300 transactions that need processing each month.

The CEO and authorised staff can all access the system from anywhere, even by smartphone or tablet. Their accountants review the data, sort out any minor issues that emerge, and prepare the end-of-month reports and reconciliations. This means Excellent Care Homes has a very efficient accounting process that is always up to date without needing to engage a bookkeeper or internal accountant.

Protecting your image
– the Guernsey Image Right

About the author

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David Evans is a director of Collas Crill IP, a specialist associated practice of the Channel Islands law firm Collas Crill.

A law graduate of Westminster University, David has spent the past 15 years actively involved in the intellectual property business. He spent his first six years as head of IP for a multinational company, during which time the company's IP portfolio grew massively following international expansion. For the past nine years David has been an independent IP consultant, advising businesses small and large on their IP strategies and portfolio management.

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Modern-day stars of sports, music and other entertainment media no longer derive their income solely from their primary professional activity; sponsorship deals and other forms of endorsement have made "image" a valuable commodity.

Added to this, the rise of the Internet means someone's image can appear on a product and go global in an instant. This has made protecting the rights of the image owner more and more significant. However, here lies the problem – different jurisdictions around the world recognise and deal with image differently. This can range from minimal protection under English law to more comprehensive protection in the US.

Three recent examples illustrate this inconsistency.

Rihanna

The pop star sued Topshop – a UK fashion retailer – for using her image on a t-shirt. Although Topshop paid to use the image, complying with the copyright owned by the photographer, they did not seek permission from Rihanna to use her image for promotional purposes.

Rihanna was ultimately successful in her action. However, this was not because image rights protection exists in English law but because this particular judge recognised her reputation for fashion and took the view her followers may have believed she had endorsed the product. A different judge may have viewed it differently.

Ryan Hart

The star US quarterback accused Electronic Arts – a video games manufacturer – of using his image in a computer game without his permission. The only way Electronic Arts could win this case was by

demonstrating it had altered the image in some way. It couldn't and the court upheld the athlete's right to protect himself against commercial exploitation.

Scarlett Johansson

The American actress sued French author Grégoire Delancourt, whose book *La première chose qu'on regard* featured a Scarlett Johansson lookalike in the storyline. While agreeing the book was defamatory, the French court disagreed that it fraudulently exploited her image and awarded only minimal damages.

These examples illustrate the way different jurisdictions handle the tricky issue of image rights, so the ability to register image rights might bring some clarity and substance to protecting image. This has led in some way to the Image Rights (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Ordinance, 2012 – often referred to as the Guernsey Image Right. For the first time there is a mechanism enabling registration of image rights and the management of these rights in the future.

The Guernsey Image Right – opportunities

The Guernsey Image Right allows high-profile clients to register rights that they can't register anywhere else in the world. This in turn enables their managers to structure and protect these rights effectively. This becomes especially important when considering licensing deals, and tax planning and succession planning opportunities.

Because the rights can be owned by any entity or individual, anywhere in the world, there is complete flexibility in the way image rights can be managed and controlled. Although this is an intellectual property product needing specialist knowledge, once it has been registered, any number of service providers, in any jurisdiction, can administer it. And the rights can be licensed, sub-licensed, and assigned just like any other piece of property.

Presently it is not clear what happens to image rights after the owner dies. In some American states rights continue after death, but it is difficult to see how this could possibly be true under English law. The Guernsey Image Right is renewable and can last for ever. What's more, it can apply to anyone who has already died provided death occurred up to 100 years before the date of application.

Looking ahead

As the Guernsey Image Right market matures, there is likely to be specialist interest in the registration of the rights themselves but with participation from other service providers for the ongoing management of the rights holder. The Guernsey Image Right also gives these providers a new product to bolt on to their other services such as wealth management and succession planning.

The Guernsey Image Right offers real opportunity for service providers with high-profile clients and is a huge step forward in protecting and recognising their rights and commercial interests.

The Guernsey Image Right allows high-profile clients to register rights that they can't register anywhere else in the world.

Say Hello to the Elephants
Quadrant Two: Solutions

About the author

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Tony is a Certified Public Accountant and founding partner of Rose, Snyder & Jacobs, the Los Angeles member firm of Russell Bedford International. His client responsibilities include tax and management consulting advice to closely-held corporations, family-owned businesses, partnerships and the high-net-worth individuals that own them. He is author of the business guide *Say Hello to the Elephants* and has just published his second book *Five Eyes on the Fence: Protecting the Five Core Capitals of Your Business.*

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We all have elephants – professional or personal problems, needs or truths that we ignore, usually to our detriment. In *Say Hello to the Elephants*, I offer a powerful system for confronting issues, along with tools to address problems, achieve clarity, and make decisions. I call this Quadrant Thinking. In this, the second of four articles, I present an overview of Quadrant Two: Solutions.

Solutions

In Quadrant One, we looked at reaching clarity as a means of identifying your ideal outcome or life. Having achieved clarity and defined your goals, you know where you want to go.

In Quadrant Two, we will look at how you get there: your solutions.

Obstacles are stepping stones that narrow the solution

When people talk about goals they cannot achieve, they usually name a list of obstacles that are standing in the way of meeting these goals.

But their perspective is wrong! By changing your perspective, you will begin to see that most obstacles are actually milestones that represent achievement. If you plan to eliminate obstacles, you move one step closer to your goal. In this context, obstacles become welcome milestones instead of barriers.

Sausage is subjective

Depending on individual tastes, nobody can unequivocally love all sausage. Why? Because sausages come in all flavours. Sausage, therefore, is subjective.

This is also true of solutions. Your solutions must suit your tastes. What tastes good to another may not taste good to you.

When you consider solutions to complicated problems with your advisers, be sure to question the solutions and ensure they are the right fit for you. If you truly understand a solution, you will be able to answer these questions:

- What is it?
- How is it applicable?
- Why does it work?
- What can go wrong?
- Who must be involved?
- How much does it cost to implement?
- How much does it cost to sustain?
- What must be done to sustain it?

And make sure your advisers offer multiple solutions; after all, sausage is subjective.

The artichoke theory

When you work towards achieving a certain goal, remember to keep it simple. You should always break the steps down into small, achievable milestones. Conquer obstacles and implement solutions the same way you eat an artichoke: one leaf at a time.

The smaller the steps the simpler things get, and the more likely you are to achieve a favourable outcome.

Stop and ask yourself Is what I am doing right now directly related to reaching my main goal? The answer will always be yes if you keep things simple. If the answer is no, you are making things difficult for yourself.

Slow down. You are in a hurry

Once you achieve clarity, you will feel a surge of energy to accomplish your goals. But when something is important, you must slow down, focus on the solutions, or risk making rash decisions. Take a deep breath and stay calm. Only then will you have the wherewithal to address obstacles, make rational decisions, and move your plans forward.

The law of unintended consequences

All conduct has unintended consequences. The unintended consequences of negative behaviour are inevitably negative, but positive behaviour brings positive unintended consequences.

With clarity, your unintended consequences become strategic by-products of your planned conduct. Strategic by-products are always positive because your planning, the purposefulness of your goals, and the alignment of your goals with your values all create a solid base to which positive things can attach.

Choosing the right trusted advisory team

Regardless of your skills, one thing is certain: you are too close to your own situation to evaluate objectively your whole picture. Finding the right team of advisers will help you define your clarity and solutions.

The ideal adviser is trustworthy, competent, reliable, and team-oriented but these commodities are rare in the real world.

Trust comes in many forms. Fortunately, David Maister, Charles Green, and Robert Galford – authors of The Trusted Adviser – designed a formula to help evaluate and rate a trusted adviser.

Based on a one-to-ten scale, a trusted adviser's rating is the sum of competence + reliability + intimacy divided by self-orientation. The higher the number, the more intensely you will trust your adviser.

Being in control of the process

If you give someone else control, they will take control. Although you might rely on various advisers, you must sit at the head of the table and raise your hand when you disagree or do not understand a solution that is being discussed.

This is your story, your family, your business, and your goals. When you are clear about where you are going, no one else can conduct your affairs better than you. No adviser can take that power unless you surrender it. You may not be an expert in your advisers' areas, but you are the expert in the most important area: you.

Managing by gut

Many successful businesses not only employ a team of consultants to help them find the right solutions, they also use specific tools. One such tool is the Kolbe A Index.

Kathy Kolbe developed the Kolbe Wisdom in the 1980s. She understood that many instruments measured intellect (IQ) and the affective mind (personality) but could not find one that measured how people behave when free to be themselves (conative mind).

Most tools try to define what people are not good at and encourage them to do better. Kolbe tells people to concentrate on what they are good at – how they behave at a gut level – and to then leverage those strengths.

Late payments squeeze **European businesses**

About the author

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Tony Carey is managing partner and founder of Cooney Carey, Russell Bedford's member firm in Dublin. Tony has over 30 years' experience in corporate finance and business advisory services. His time as CFO of a large private concern gained him valuable practical commercial experience. His specialist areas include strategic planning, corporate recovery, financial investments, project funding and negotiation.

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Late payment of invoices is a major cause of cash-flow problems for businesses and it can be very costly to pursue and recover these debts. The European Commission's Late Payment Directive (2011/7/EU) came into being on 16 March 2013 with the purpose of combating late payment and simplifying the process of pursuing these payments.

Aims of the directive

The Directive has four key aims.

Harmonisation of payment periods for public authorities across the EU
Public authorities must pay within 30 days, unless there are very exceptional circumstances. Private sector businesses must pay within 60 days.

Contractual freedom in commercial business transactions
Private sector enterprises must pay within 60 days unless the parties agree otherwise and the terms are fair.

Entitlement to claim interest
Businesses can claim interest on late payments as well as charge a fixed €40 to compensate for recovery costs. Businesses can also claim all further reasonable recovery costs.

Increase to statutory interest rate
Businesses can claim interest at a rate 8% above the European Central Bank's reference rate.

The Directive merely introduces a minimum requirement: EU member states can continue with, or introduce, more stringent measures should they wish.

Is the Late Payment Directive working?

You might expect that now the Directive has been in place for more than a year we would see some visible improvements in the time it takes for businesses to receive payment. Sadly, experience around Europe suggests this is not yet the case.

A recent Europe-wide business survey suggests the problem exists throughout Europe. The survey revealed that 55 per cent of businesses reported late payments resulting in loss of income, 63 per cent claimed additional pressures on liquidity, and 50 per cent cited late payments as having a direct impact on company growth.

Late payments impacting liquidity of Spanish businesses

The situation appears to be particularly acute in Spain, where 80 per cent of businesses claim late payments are affecting liquidity. Sixty-nine per cent of businesses claim late payments have resulted in a direct loss of income, with average bad-debt losses of 2.9 per cent. And while payment delays in the private sector appear to be better in Spain than in Europe as a whole, public sector businesses, it would appear, are delaying payments by up to 79 days.

Ricardo García-Nieto Conde, a partner at Russell Bedford Barcelona member firm ASEPYME / GNL Auditores, attributes this to the wider problems afflicting Spain's public sector, and he does not expect any improvement to the situation in the short term. He believes it is hard to overestimate the impact current austerity policies have had on those businesses reliant on the public sector and that there comes a point when businesses must evaluate the impact of public-sector clients on their on-going cash-flow situation, and their longer-term viability.

However, there are signs of improvement elsewhere in Spain. PIMEC (Catalonia's leading SME organisation) has been lobbying for new legislation to ensure penalties for late payment are enforced through the appropriate channels, and are hopeful that this may be adopted by the end of 2014.

Public-sector organisations worst offenders in Italy

While the public sector appears to be the main culprit in Italy too, with average delays of 85 days, the problem exists across all sectors – 76 per cent of Italian businesses cite late payments as a cause of a squeeze on liquidity.

Luca Borella, a partner at Russell Bedford Bologna member firm Magagnoli & Associati, believes this is the result of public sector contracts under which many companies are reluctant to pursue payment, convinced that pursuing the public sector is highly ineffective and expensive. Instead, many prefer to wait – suffering financially, losing income and, in turn, causing a 'domino effect', resulting in late payments to other companies not directly involved with the public organisations.

Late payments forcing Irish businesses to dismiss staff

Here in the Republic of Ireland, 47 per cent of businesses surveyed claimed late payments had impacted their business to such an extent that they had been forced to dismiss staff. Sixty per cent claimed the problem had forced them to put recruitment plans on hold.

It is interesting to see that 88 per cent of businesses surveyed cite their clients' own cash-flow problems as the main reason for payment delays. The Irish banking system is only now making headway in resolving its own liquidity positions in order that it can lend. However, the withdrawal of a number of international banks has meant that a significant amount of available funds are being used to refinance existing banking arrangements. Insurance-based products (such as supplier finance and invoice discounting) have similarly been badly affected by the withdrawal of international insurance companies.

However, there are very definite signs of recovery. Ireland was the first country to hold its hands up and declare the problem, and the first to take the pain to address it. Confidence is growing and liquidity is returning. The lessons are clear, though: management attention needs to focus on planning cash flow as well as profitability. Too often a business's projections consist only of a profitability and sales forecast.

What steps can you take to protect your business?

When you offer payment terms you are offering credit. This makes it important to know your customer, so apply the same principles and ask the same questions that a bank would. You must understand:

- who the borrower is
- what kind of business you are dealing with
- how much credit they are asking for
- how and when they intend paying
- what terms you will apply.

The importance of work-life balance

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Lew Chui Hoong is a senior manager with Russell Bedford LC & Company, the Malaysian member firm of Russell Bedford International. She has close to 10 years of professional experience in the areas of internal and external auditing. She has been actively involved in audit engagements for companies in various industries including public listed entities and multinational corporations.

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Finding work-life balance is about creating an equilibrium between work (your career and ambitions) and lifestyle (your health, family, leisure, and spiritual development).

The concept of work-life balance first appeared in the 1980s when the work-place dynamic began to change. Since then it has become a concern for every business: failure to manage work-life balance can pose a serious threat to a business. However, despite its importance, managing work-life balance remains a chore for many businesses.

Work-life balance and business success are not mutually exclusive

There is a myth that exists with both employers and employees: achieving work-life balance will have an adverse effect on a business. A belief exists that it will mean fewer hours, less work, and lower productivity. This has led to a further belief that visibility equals productivity and that the longer employees spend at work somehow reflects their commitment and value to the business. So employees arrive early and leave late believing this is the way to get on.

Increasing workloads and consequent longer working hours also contribute to poor work-life balance. How this situation has occurred is not clear but too few staff, high staff turnover, poor training, and badly designed roles all play their part.

Inevitably, resource planning that fails to consider the needs of employees will have a negative impact on work-life balance – financial services is notorious for being an industry where finding work-life balance is especially difficult.

The role of technology

The inexorable advances in technological development in the last twenty years have created an environment where we do not need to be on the premises to be at work. These advancements were meant to make our working lives easier but, perhaps unintentionally, they have created pressure by making employees available and contactable all day, every day.

This culture piles pressure on employees and makes achieving any level of work-life balance almost impossible.

The role of employers

One of the quickest ways employers can encourage a better work-life balance is to dispel the myth that presence equates to contribution. Employers need to place the emphasis on the contribution employees make while they are present, not how long they are present.

Overworked employees cannot achieve work-life balance and will become unhealthy and unhappy. This in turn makes them less productive and contributes to increased absenteeism. Consider offering flexible working hours; research shows that employers that do offer it enjoy a competitive advantage over those that don't.

The role of employees

Just because technology has made it possible to work anywhere and anytime doesn't mean we should.

Employees searching for work-life balance need to embrace the importance of time management. The secret of managing time effectively is understanding what's important and what can wait. Employees that set objectives and block out time to focus on the right tasks can make the most of their day and accomplish their goals.

Managing technology is important too. We cannot halt the advance of technology, nor should we, but we must manage technology, not allow it to manage us. Employees and employers must learn not to be slaves to email and mobile phones: part of managing technology is knowing when to turn it off.

Employers and employees must work together

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to achieving work-life balance – everyone is different and has different priorities.

While employers must foster a culture of work-life balance, employees must play their part too by taking ownership of the problem. Employees must be willing to discuss it with employers while also understanding the needs of the business. Employers must be willing to listen.

Work-life balance is a two-way street.

News in brief

- International professional services group Russell Bedford has expanded its coverage in Turkey with the addition of an Istanbul firm, Ulusal Bağımsız Denetim ve YMM A.Ş. (UBD), as a network member alongside long-standing Ankara member DMF System International.

  Established in 2001, UBD is a firm of independent auditors and certified public accountants with its head office in Istanbul and branches in Adapazari/Sakarya, Mudanya/Bursa and Gaziantep.

  With three partners (Hakverdi Yaradilmiş, Hasan Yüceer and Ömer Necdet Aydemir) and a total staff of 45, UBD has a strong focus on tax consulting, VAT compliance and auditing, and also provides accounting, business consulting and internal audit services.

- Russell Bedford has extended its presence in the United States with the addition of a new Washington DC member firm – Kaiser Scherer & Schlegel, PLLC – based in McLean, Virginia.

  Established 35 years ago, Kaiser Scherer & Schlegel (KSS) is a full-service CPA firm with eight principals, including three equity partners: Elizabeth Kaiser, Ned Scherer and Jeff Schlegel.

  Many of the firm's principals and staff were formerly employees of Big Four firms.

  KSS has a broad client base ranging from individuals to privately-held businesses. The firm provides a full range of services including accounting, payroll and tax compliance, domestic and international tax planning, and audits, reviews and compilations. KSS is registered with the PCAOB and has a dedicated specialist team performing broker-dealer audits.

- A major European Commission (EC) framework contract for audit services has been won by a grouping of three Russell Bedford member firms. The group, led by Lubbock Fine (London), includes Equation (Paris) and Domus (Berlin).

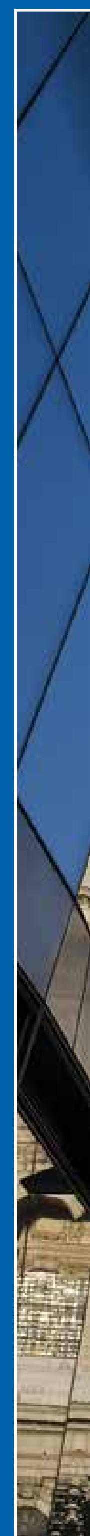
  The substantial contract, awarded to the consortium as first-ranked contractor, is to provide financial audit services to the EC in relation to research grants under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7). Such research grants are typically extended to universities, higher education establishments, not-for-profit organisations, quasi-governmental bodies and companies, including SMEs.

  Under the framework arrangement, the consortium expects to conduct between 500 and 600 audits per year between 2014 and 2017. The audit assignments will take place throughout Europe, with around 60 per cent taking place in more than 30 countries outside of the UK, France and Germany. In most cases, audit firms supporting the consortium in other countries are also members of the Russell Bedford network.

- FBL SENCRL Chartered Professional Accountants, the Montreal member firm of Russell Bedford International, has announced the appointment of two associate partners – Olivier Fleury-Bellavance and Ghislaine Guilbault – based in the firm's Quebec City and Drummondville offices.

  Olivier Fleury-Bellavance qualified in 2005, joining accountants Girard Lavoie Mooney in 2008 prior to the firm's merger with FBL in 2014. His focus is on assurance assignments for clients in sectors such as manufacturing, real estate, construction and retail. He also has expertise in business financing, start-ups, mergers and acquisitions, financial planning and corporate reorganisation.

  Ghislaine Guilbault has led her own assurance team since 2012, focusing on the transportation, construction, information technology and manufacturing sectors.



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