



## Expat expertise enables firm to deliver on payroll promises

### CUSTOMER PROFILE

Aberdeen-based Anderson Anderson Brown (AAB) provides specialist business and accounting related advisory services to a wide range of clients, from multinational, global players to SMEs and sole traders operating locally. It has a particularly strong reputation in the oil and gas sector.

### BUSINESS CHALLENGE

AAB wanted to offer clients a high quality payroll outsourcing service as part of the firm's drive to become a 'one stop shop for all finance and accounting needs'. But as it sought a new solution, there was one especially vital component required - it must be able to handle expat payrolls to meet the demands of its many overseas clients.

### SOLUTIONS USED

IRIS Payroll Professional  
IRIS Payroll Professional's Expatriate option  
Bureau Management System module

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— Gary Johnstone - Senior Payroll Manager AAB

Aberdeen-based Chartered Accountants Anderson Anderson and Brown (AAB) needed specialist software to serve the niche needs of its oil and gas clients. Seeking to deliver stellar customer experience, it found IRIS Payroll Professional had the answers it was seeking.

### Becoming a 'one stop shop'

Back in 2009, AAB decided to offer clients a high quality payroll outsourcing service as part of the firm's drive to become a 'one stop shop for all finance and accounting needs'.

This approach played an important role in helping the firm become one of Scotland's leading independent firms of Chartered accountants.

However, it wasn't easy turning that initial three clients into a base of more than 100. The firm had particular, niche requirements, with many of its clients being expats. Aberdeen is regarded as the oil and gas capital of Europe and AAB has built a particularly strong reputation in that sector.

### Niche needs from overseas

This meant a key requirement was that, on top of meeting the basic needs of UK clients and HMRC requirements, it needed to be able to handle expat payrolls. This was essential for AAB to assist its oil and gas clients, whose geographic headquarters might be in the USA, the Middle East or the Nordics, with many of their people working overseas.

These clients rely on AAB to advise them on complex international operations, dealing with UK and international tax compliance, providing guidance on social security regulations, global employment arrangements, and of course, paying their people.

Gary Johnstone, Payroll Senior Manager for AAB Payroll, explains: *"We reached the point where clients were increasingly asking us whether, instead of us simply providing them with advice on how to manage dual wage tax withholdings (both UK PAYE and overseas wage tax), we could take over the practical running of their payroll, making sure their people were paid accurately, on time and in line with each country's specific legislation."*

*"In essence, they wanted to outsource their payroll function to an organisation that understands the intricacies of their international business operations. So, late in 2009 we decided to look for a payroll processing system that would enable us to offer a high-quality bureau service."*

*"The expat capability was a key element in selection of the IRIS Payroll Professional solution. It allows us the flexibility we need to cater for the widely varying requirements of onshore/offshore multijurisdiction employee payroll. Without this module we would never be able to cope with the large multi-national companies up here"*

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## The hunt for an expat solution

The firm's search for the ideal solution culminated in choosing IRIS Payroll Professional. The firm recognised IRIS's capability for providing first-class software incorporating expat payroll, as well as a long-established payroll bureau management system.

IRIS Payroll Professional's Expatriate option is a comprehensive software package for processing the complex requirements of expat payrolls.

Gary says: *"The expat capability was a key element in selection of the IRIS Payroll Professional solution. It allows us the flexibility we need to cater for the widely varying requirements of onshore/offshore multi-jurisdiction employee payroll. Without this module we would never be able to cope with the large multinational companies up here."*

The expat module is used by many of the UK's leading bureaux, financial institutions and international corporates. It has powerful and flexible functionality that enables AAB Payroll to profile how its clients' individual employees' pay, and benefits are processed. IRIS Payroll Professional also provides an ePayslips option – a self-service payslip facility that significantly reduces employers' administration costs and provides employees with secure internet access to current and historic payslips, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. This is especially useful for people working offsite and overseas.

## Unique in the marketplace

Gary says: *"I think IRIS Payroll Professional's Bureau Management System module (BMS) is unique in the bureau marketplace. We certainly saw nothing like it during our selection project. It's fine to have a powerful payroll engine but with multiple clients, all with different deadlines, and multiple payroll operators here at AAB it is vital to have a higher level management tool. IRIS Payroll Professional's BMS provides this."*

*"Payroll processing today is such a complex procedure, heavy with multiple deadlines and potential penalties and pitfalls. The BMS module allows us to control the whole operation, with plenty of the flexibility we need in a busy, changing world and to concentrate on delivering a high quality service to our clients. In fact, so important is the tool to us that we promote BMS to potential clients as one of the key reasons they should choose us to manage their requirements."*

## A blend of skills and experience

So, AAB has the payroll systems and administrative tools it needs to underpin its service delivery, but what really makes it stand out from the pack is the blend of experience and skills that support its client organisations' HR and payroll functions.

*"Our Employer Solutions team for the oil and gas market differentiates us significantly from other payroll providers in that we provide an integrated service covering payroll, UK and international tax, technology, wealth management and accounting services, all under one roof,"* Partner Kevin Mann says.

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*"This includes specialist tax and social security advice specific to complex offshore arrangements with unique individual legislation, such as mariners, divers, offshore employment companies and internationally mobile contractors and employees. And we integrate all of this into a practical, working payroll solution."*

*"We operate a number of non-UK payrolls – for example, for clients with staff working in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands – and by using the expat module we are able to advise upon and manage the impact of any double wage tax withholdings and the resultant impact on net pay, so securing any commercial benefits available for clients."*

*"This is backed by proactive identification of potential tax and payroll issues which we discuss with clients and track through a monitoring tool for their internationally mobile employees."*

### Ad-hoc client reporting requirements

AAB's Payroll Professional includes Payroll Professional's PRE flexible reporting tool. This stands for 'Pay Run Extractor' and, as the name implies, it allows clients to draw out information relating to each individual payroll calculation run performed by the software.

*"Without PRE, meeting client ad-hoc client reporting requirements would prove both costly and take longer. It allows us to say 'yes' to more of their requests, build these reports into their regular reporting pack and often save finance and HR teams significant time in budget and forecasting cycles," Gary says.*

*"There are plenty of reports built into the IRIS Payroll Professional system, but it is inevitable that some clients will have requirements unique to themselves – in fact they will sometimes want a report only once to help them assess a situation and glean an answer which would otherwise have to be assembled from a range of standard reports. And getting the output directly into Excel is handy because the reports are often used to support further analysis at the client end. We have also used PRE to improve our own reconciliation procedures."*



### Always looking to improve

With a focus on adding value to their clients' businesses, the proactivity of the firm's Employer Solutions team extends to continuous improvement of both internal processes, procedures and systems and also those of their clients.

Team members are encouraged to develop strategic client relationships and work in partnership with them to provide excellent levels of service. These relationships have been especially valuable when the firm's staff, clients and IRIS Payroll Professional software specialists came together to deal with HMRC's RTI (Real Time Information) PAYE reporting system and Pension Auto Enrolment legislation – two significant payroll related legislative changes over the last five to ten years.