

From 0 to 100: fledgling firm's client numbers soar as IRIS plays 'fundamental' role



Customer Profile

Accountants Hannah Walton and Karen Fletcher struck out on their own to start their first practice - Peppermint Cloud - in summer 2018. The Wiltshire-based firm has rapidly grown its client base, which varies widely from web designers, garages, landscape gardeners, builders, a personalised gift firm, and a publisher.

Overview

Peppermint Cloud needed to find software that would take care of all aspects of running a practice smoothly, while allowing the owners to work seamlessly, despite living 30 miles apart, and keeping administrative burden to a minimum.

Solutions used

- > IRIS Accountancy Suite
- > IRIS Hosting

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Challenge

Hannah and Karen took the daring decision to go it alone and set up their own accountancy practice in 2018. Having worked together previously, they wanted to work more directly with customers and were determined to do things differently.

Hannah and Karen wanted to avoid a conventional office set up in their new venture and escape being tied down by software that necessitated they work in the same location the whole time. Work-life balance was also important for both, with Karen having two children. They also wanted reliable, compliant software that was efficient and would help their business work as productively as possible.

They needed to find a software partner to help them achieve all of the above.



Solutions

Escaping the traditional office for a better life

Thanks to IRIS Hosting, they operate as a single unit, while working and living 30 miles apart at two home offices, in their two Wiltshire towns.

Hannah says: "IRIS Hosting has allowed us to work seamlessly. Karen sits 30 miles away from where I sit. We work together two days a week at one or the other's home office but with a hosted solution we don't have to have an expensive office where we can use IRIS Accountancy Suite.

"We just carry on using it wherever we are and it's absolutely brilliant. We can have a Zoom call and share screens so we can work together when needed."

Life has seriously changed for the pair, who began working together at a large established firm about 15 years ago, Hannah says. One example illustrates how this has really come true:

"I was talking with a client the other day about a tax return while we were standing in a pen with two

one-hour-old calves on a farmyard," Hannah explains. "It was great - I love animals."

Why investing in software reaps rewards

The firm decided to invest substantially in software, as Hannah explains: *"When we started out and looked at what software we would invest in for our new practice, IRIS was the most expensive. But if you compare that against employing somebody to do ten hours per week, it's the cheapest."*

She has no doubt that IRIS saves them substantial amounts of money they would otherwise have to spend on employee wages.

In fact, Hannah even describes IRIS as *"like having a member of staff"*, explaining: *"If none of the accounts and tax systems spoke to each other, as they do in IRIS, I feel I would have to have an admin person sat in my office doing all of that. It's all seamless and links together. You only have to press update on one program and the whole system updates."*



Results

Soaring client numbers show early success

When they set out, Hannah and Karen didn't have grandiose visions of instant success and clients flocking to them. Yet, nearly 2 years on, with client numbers skyrocketing from nothing, to a starting base of 15, and now well over 100, the business is in great health and growing rapidly.

"We didn't expect it this fast - it's turned out better than we ever thought."

So, just how important has technology been to the early successes of this fledgling business?

"Fundamental," is Hannah's response.

She says: *"The basis of everything that we've done has been the IRIS Accountancy Suite. It's been absolutely brilliant. It's a great piece of software, it speeds our life up and helps us run Peppermint Cloud."*

"We couldn't run this business without IRIS software - it's brilliant, we can't fault it. We wouldn't work as efficiently without this technology. The decision

to go with IRIS was the best one we've made in the business and it's helped us to grow to where we are now. We are very happy customers!"

Looking to the future

What next for Peppermint Cloud? Hannah hopes the business continues to grow and is considering taking on an extra pair of hands on a self-employed basis in coming months. Overall, the ambitions are about the bigger personal picture.

"The aspirations are for us both are to have happy lives and clients to be happy working with us," Hannah tells us.

And she feels IRIS has enabled them to realise this so far.

"Without IRIS as a base for this business, we would have really struggled - and we may have even gone and got another job somewhere rather than starting out on our own. It's helped us to grow to where we are now."