



Helping to manage the impact of growth for Peninsula

An aCloud Expense
Case Study



Background

Peninsula is the UK's leading provider of employment law and health & safety services. Established since 1983, around 28,000 customer businesses now choose to integrate Peninsula services as part of their HR and Health and Safety departments. The business attaches significant value to its employees and this was recognised with the award of third place in The Sunday Times Best Companies 2014.

Peninsula's success is built on the ability to let customer businesses plug-in HR and health and safety expertise, areas where accuracy, process and specialised knowledge are essential. Peninsula allows employers to focus on the success and growth of their businesses rather than become distracted by personnel, health & safety or related issues.

Headquartered in Manchester with approximately 900 staff across the UK, Ireland and Australia, the business has expanded in recent years acquiring expertise on tax and health, areas closely related to its core competences. Peninsula makes its expertise available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, 365 days a year, helping employers resolve all kinds of Employment Law or Health and Safety related issues and difficulties.

“

The initial results have been brilliant. We are more in control of time and expenditure. Easy to follow user guides have helped 80% of users to make the transition without any issues.

SIAN HICKMAN



The Challenge

The growth of Peninsula brought an increase in transactions and complexity for the finance department. Existing systems were unable to handle changes required to business processes, and as a result, a number of finance systems were upgraded.

Led by Sian Hickman, the Purchase Ledger team found that manually processing business expenses was particularly problematical. “We now process up to 250 expense claims every week, so a manual approach to expenses generated a significant volume of paper.”

“The weekly expense claims timetable included a submission deadline of Thursday for payment into employee bank accounts the following Tuesday. However, with a highly dispersed salesforce that does not attend the office regularly there was a reliance on postal services. This often resulted in delayed payments, leaving employees out of pocket for longer than necessary,” says Sian Hickman.

One of the main issues was duplication. Claimants keyed expenses into spreadsheets and finance keyed them into the accounting system as a nominal total. Claimants attached receipts to spreadsheet print outs and these would be manually processed with the emphasis on checking mileage and VAT.



We now process up to 250 expense claims every week, so a manual approach to expenses generated a significant volume of paper.

SIAN HICKMAN

“This usually required two person days for processing. However, across the volume of claims, when you include the additional processing required for line manager and finance management approval and payroll, expenses was consuming the time of claimants, approvers as well as the finance team. The time spent on what is essentially a routine piece of admin was significant and disproportionate,” Sian Hickman says.

The Solution

Peninsula selected aCloud Expense after a thorough evaluation process. The alternatives considered were expense systems based on tier one ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) platforms. “On the central criteria of expenses, aCloud outscored these competitors by quite some distance,” Sian Hickman says.

aCloud Expense is an online solution that automates and simplifies expense management. An intuitive user interface enables employees to use mobile devices to enter expense items and capture receipts to support claims when on the move.

The system stores claims items in user accounts until they are submitted by the user. There is no re-keying and finance administrators are able to process claims rapidly, with mileages verified and VAT calculated automatically. The system workflow automates approval processes, prompting line managers or financial controllers when action is required.



aCloud Expense integrates directly with finance and accounting systems and automates the payroll process at the click of the financial controller's mouse. A host of features enhance usability, including support for expense policy limits; postcode based mileage verification, multiple currency support and frequently used 'favourite' expenses.

Integrated messaging helps resolve issues quickly and efficiently. The system locks in the audit trail and detailed reporting provides management with analytics and business intelligence. For those without dispensations, P11D and VAT reclaim reports are just two of a number of finance-friendly features that help streamline and minimise the impact of expenses on productivity of claimants, approvers and finance departments.

The Results

The rollout of aCloud Expense commenced in March 2014 and was staged through to July 2014. "The initial results have been brilliant. We are more in control of time and expenditure. Easy to follow user guides have helped 80% of users to make the transition without any issues. When help has been requested, a walkthrough over the phone has proved to be all that has been needed," says Sian Hickman.

Approvers are much happier seeing claims on screen rather than printed out. "This provides better control of this part of the process as you don't have paper receipts flying all over the place. It is also much quicker and you can address them as they come in. It is now an everyday task and is much less onerous than before," says Sian Hickman.

She continues: "The impact for Purchase Ledger is that we have reduced the processing time by 50%, to one person day. Processing is an activity that now requires a 'little and often' approach. Under the manual system we processed claims in big batches. The aCloud Expense workflow presents claims for processing in real time, so they are constantly trickling through. Processing in small bites is less fatiguing and enables scrutiny to be a little more forensic. The messaging function has definitely reduced the volume of telephone queries."

One of the key benefits is a little less concrete and more intangible. Peninsula's core business is based on expert knowledge and offering professional advice in complex areas. It's about efficiency, accuracy and doing things properly. "Streamlining expense management with aCloud Expense is much more appropriate to our corporate culture and values," says Sian Hickman.

The finance department has also moved towards being more of a paperless office. Sian Hickman says: "We now use less paper and no longer need to archive paper-based claims for 5 years. This reduces clutter and is going to reduce our offsite archiving costs."

It is a little early to properly qualify the actual savings; however, the general consensus is that aCloud Expense is saving Peninsula money. The next stage is to start looking in detail at the reporting and management information from expenses across the business. As data accumulates, aCloud Expense allows a thorough examination of claims history. "It is going to reveal patterns that help us identify trends and important detail we can use strategically," Sian Hickman says.



Peninsula Business Services

- UK's leading provider of employment law and health & safety services
- Headquartered in Manchester with around 900 staff across the UK, Ireland and Australia
- Expansion in recent years has added additional expertise on tax and health

Challenges

- Growth increased transaction volumes and complexity for the finance department
- Duplication of expense data keying by claimants and finance personnel
- Delays to expense payments resulting from reliance on postal service

Solution

- aCloud Expense online solution selected that automates and simplifies expense management
- Easy to use intuitive user interface enables expense entry and receipt capture on the move
- Integrates with finance and accounting systems, automating payments
- Host of features enhance usability for claimants, approvers and the finance team

Key results

- Staged rollout with 80% of users adopting without training
- 50% reduction in processing time for Bought Ledger team
- Less fatiguing, facilitating better levels of scrutiny
- Streamlined expense management more appropriate to corporate culture and values
- Reduced use of paper and archiving costs
- Identify trends and patterns of strategic value





About aCloud Expense

aCloud Expense is one of the suite of integrated aCloud applications developed, marketed and provided by Access Group, a business with over 6,000 UK business customers. Access was founded in 1991 and focuses on providing vertically focused industry specific software solutions.

The cloud may mean your data could be quite literally anywhere in the world. However, with aCloud you're never far from us. Our team of over 600 people includes 100 support engineers and 130 developers across 14 UK offices. This enables us to provide consultancy and support with a personal touch, unlike many other cloud software service providers.

Our in-house development team focus on making aCloud the simplest expense management solution on the market. We integrate all the functionality and wrap in the compliance that today's businesses need to tackle administrative chores like expense management. Expense management is our core business, so there is no need to let it impact yours.

Contact us

www.accessacloud.com/expense

E: hello@accessacloud.com

T: 0845 075 6000