

Everything you
need to know about
HR consulting

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IRIS

The minute you employ staff, you enter a new world of responsibility - and a duty to follow a dizzying array of laws and regulations.

For many of you reading this, just thinking about these duties can increase the weight on your shoulders. It brings to mind myriad contracts, benefit choices, and often obligatory policies.

All of these are essential for staying compliant while nurturing your team and attracting recruits.

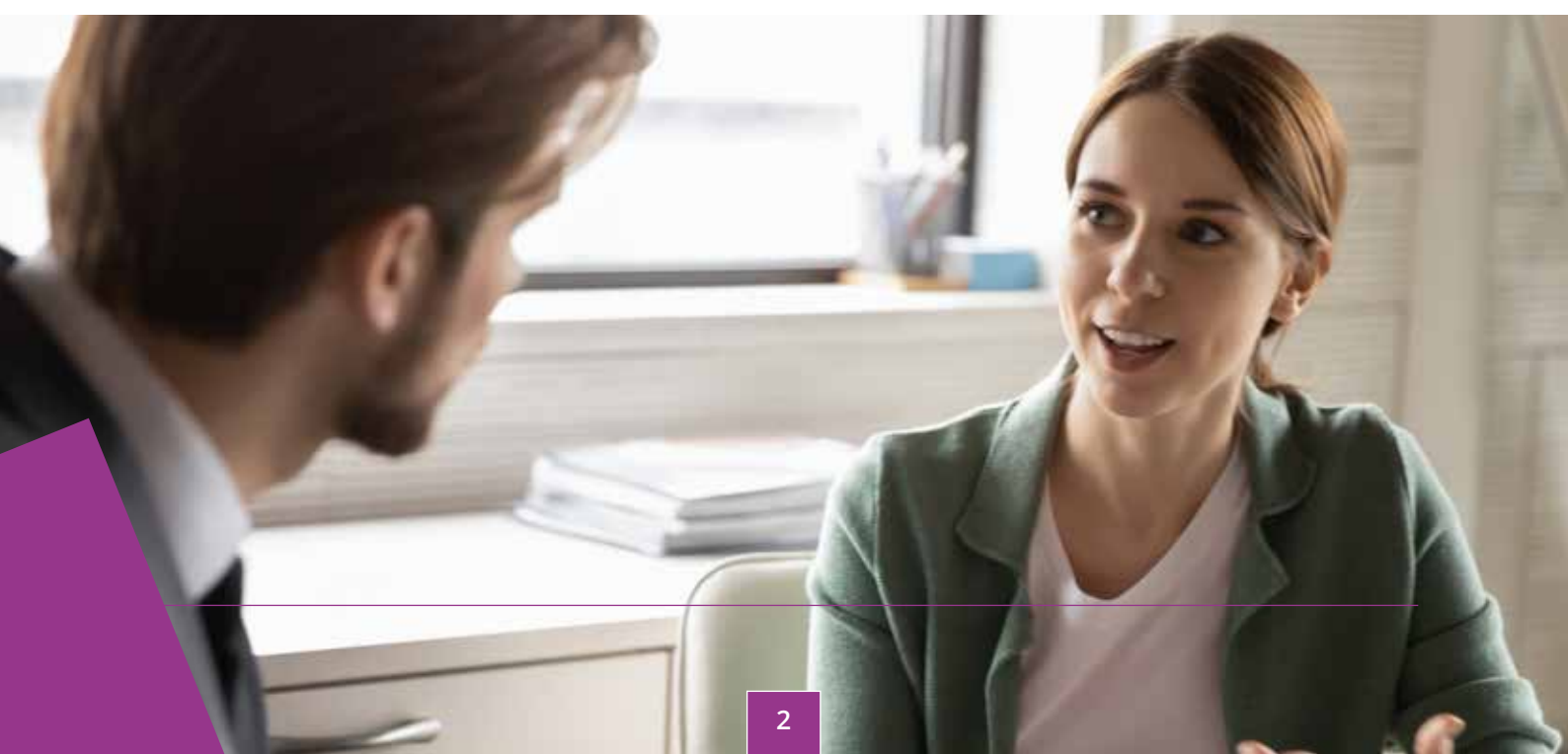
But if anything goes wrong, you can lose staff and even find yourself in legal trouble.

An ever-growing issue

And it doesn't end there. The bigger your business gets, the more HR-related obstacles it will face. Organic and strategic growth challenges should not be underestimated, nor should we trivialise the steps needed for geographical expansion.

It's a good thing, then, that this guide to HR consultancy is here to help. Once demystified, HR consulting can lift such burdens while helping you protect your business and nurture your workforce.

A good HR consultancy should help you find a payment arrangement that works for your organisation. For example, an international consultancy might be able to charge based on the number of countries you need help with.



Understanding HR consulting

So, what exactly is HR consulting? In short, HR consultants hold the answer to all those HR procedures and issues you're not sure about.

Done right, it's a team of experts that work as an extension of your business. They provide advice, liaise with third parties and draft documentation. They can be at the other end of a phone, contactable by email, or able to visit you in person.

It doesn't matter what it is you're trying to figure out; a phone call to a great HR consultancy is usually enough to put your mind at rest – either because you have the advice you need immediately or they are putting things in motion to solve your problems.

Why might we need HR consulting?

Eventually, every business runs out of HR insight. It's a massive subject steeped in law and regulation. Nobody can know it all.

For example, a small business might suddenly find themselves in hot water with compliance issues when they've never had a problem before. Meanwhile, an SME might be searching in vain for cost-effective benefits that will woo prospective employees.

Or perhaps a fast-growing business is interested in expanding, and they need to get to grips with how they can move their staff across the world.

What UK businesses need from HR consulting

Every business needs policies and other compliant paperwork to help with things like staffing, disciplinaries and grievances.

New business owners quickly realise that many such policies are not always a 'nice-to-have'. For instance, if a contract is not up to scratch, that's a legal issue. Thankfully, HR advisors can produce a contract based on your business and even run an audit later to see how it's working.

Of course, ticking legal boxes is a great start, but you need to ensure paperwork, policies and standards are aligned with your industry to compete. If you don't, you can find the tables are quickly turned when interviewing a job candidate who wants to know more. Thankfully, HR consultants can help you understand what's right for the market from an HR point of view; they can keep you competitive.

Such competition, however, can in itself create compliance risks. For instance, this can happen when you're attracting a new superstar for the upper ranks of your business. You might start with a solid, compliant contract, but what about when they have terms you want to meet? Once you add them to the contract, will it still adhere to the law? It's always best to get some help.



Handling workplace events with the help of HR consulting

Policies and procedures also have to be watertight regarding events that affect employees. These can be anything from office moves or adding new job titles to bullying or harassment issues. In these cases, HR consultants might help by bringing legal know-how and, where necessary, conducting robust investigations.

Key things you might need help with regarding HR employment compliance:

- Employment rights
- HR policies
- Offer letters
- Employment contracts
- HR casework
- Performance and absence management
- Redundancy dismissals

Compensation and benefits

The design of your business' compensation and benefits offering is important - especially considering some of it is mandatory.

For example, all UK businesses have to offer a Workplace Pension to their staff, which involves automatically enrolling them. Automatic enrolment adds complexity to your pay run: you have to check who has been added, who has opted out, and who has been re-enrolled every time. But, equally, you might want to go beyond the basics and offer something competitive to raise morale and attract talent. This takes a lot of work and research.

Other benefits also provide a major draw to potential employees, like income protection, cycle-to-work schemes and private medical insurance.

Private medical insurance is important to you and your employees. Staff with private health care are likely to return to work quicker than employees under nationalised health schemes; team members on long-term sick leave are more likely to return having been cared for privately.

Again, serious savvy is needed when it comes to getting a cost-effective deal for your business and its staff while going through the paperwork to check its implications. HR consultants will often do a lot of this for you, talking to the best vendors for your staff needs and making recommendations.

Crucially, they can run an audit later on, which will help you understand how well your compensation and benefits are being implemented. They will also be on hand as benefits are being renewed so they can check you and your employees are still getting the best value.

Key things you'll need help with regarding compensation and benefits:

- A compensation and benefits strategy for both ex-pat and domestic employees
- Execution design options
- Benefits and rewards benchmarking
- Healthcare packages
- Management of the application and implementation of programmes
- Administration



Putting major changes in place

Every time you make a change, it can affect your employees.

This can be as simple as adding a new level of responsibility to the management structure. Other times, the change is much bigger.

A merger, for example, might mean having to put a TUPE process in place; each step of the way, staff need to be fully informed in the right way at the right time. You have to do this while handling any grievances or morale issues and simultaneously keep stakeholders up to date.

It's not effective for most businesses to do all this alone.

Meanwhile, a business looking to take on new companies must ensure it has done its homework. Due diligence is no small task - with numerous details about the business, its owners and the broader landscape to consider. That's before you get to grips with how this newly acquired business will fit in with the rest of your organisation.

Important things consultants can help you with for strategic M&A:

- International expansion strategies (more on this later)
- Compensation and benefits
- Compliance audits
- Terms and conditions due diligence

Onboard, offboard, above board - your HR legal checklist:

- Sometimes, it's important to spot things outside the scope of your HR expertise - especially regarding the legal side of things.
- This means that when you call up an HR consultancy, you will know what kind of help you will need first.

Onboarding staff... what might you need help with?

- An overview of employment rights
- Employer obligations compliance
- Collective bargaining requirements
- HR policies/internal regulations
- Offer letters and employment contracts
- New hire onboarding

Existing staff... what gaps do you have in your know-how?

- Probation management
- HR casework and advice
- Immigration and global mobility support
- Performance management
- Absence management

Offboarding... is there something you're not an expert in?

- Resignation
- Redundancy
- Performance dismissal
- Disciplinary dismissal

International HR Consulting

Without the support of an HR specialist, establishing a global HR function requires business-critical levels of time, money and risk.

Language barriers, cultural differences, variations in employment legislation and differences in qualifications. These are just the tip of the iceberg when you expand, opening offices in different countries.

Unfortunately, things can easily slip through the net, which means big, expensive consequences.

And even when you are being compliant, it can be difficult to manage people overseas and look after their well-being successfully.

Issues with managing overseas

One of the big problems with managing staff overseas is that it can be hard to keep up with shifting regulations. And because you might feel like you're aiming for a constantly moving target, budgeting for overseas compliance can be a nightmare, too.

A consultancy service can help, although we urge that you get assistance using a service you can sign up for and then call upon at any time (as opposed to approaching an HR consultancy on an ad hoc basis).

Documentation

If you think documentation is complex in your home country, imagine taking this stack of compliant paperwork and implementing it correctly overseas.

You must have country-compliant employment contracts, offer letters, policies and handbooks (to name but a few).

Getting someone conversant in the local laws and language is essential when setting up in a new country.

Speed is important - a good HR consultant should be helping you within days of a contract being signed.

Communication is everything. A good HR consultant should be able to explain a situation to you in terms you understand - rather than in sector jargon. Don't worry about asking them to simplify things; that's what they're there for.

What knowledge should my HR consultant have? This is individual to your firm, but there's a baseline. They need to understand the legalities of managing your staff in the country where your headquarters is based. After that, they need to be at least able to refer you to other experts when something is outside their speciality.

The complexities of overseas staff management

When running a business overseas, you cannot afford to have a relaxed, hands-off approach to staff management.

It's a complex business, and you need a central hub that can filter your company's approach to each of your international sites. Your business must understand the intricacies of employment law in each of your territories, and your cultural knowledge of your locations must be up to scratch.

Expansion means more moving parts

Expansion is not just about employing people overseas; there's every chance key staff will move to your new sites. As their employer, it falls to you to comprehensively answer their questions and guarantee a smooth transition. Your consultant should be able to take the strain by providing access to global mobility and relocation services. They can advise on work permits and visas and manage the application processes from start to finish.

If your consultants offer expatriate management, you're building a vital part of their support network. You'll be able to offer relocated team members practical and personal support before, during and after repatriation.

That way, your business and your staff can focus on the exciting changes rather than on HR-related growing pains and international logistics.

Immigration services

Immigration is a detailed process with a lot of time, money and risk attached.

A good HR consultant will be able to help with:

- Immigration - costs, documentation, applications and submissions
- Passports
- Visas
- Work permits
- Other case-specific needs

International compensation and benefits

An HR consultant should know your international team members' compensation and benefits expectations. They will also be able to help you match your international offerings with what your business is doing in its country of domicile.

In short, good HR consultants can help you with the following:

- What is mandatory, but also what is customary and competitive in your market
- What similar businesses within your industry are offering
- Benchmarking salary and benefit packages
- Insurance-based benefits such as healthcare and social security
- Supplemental benefits such as cycle-to-work schemes, free childcare and lunch vouchers
- Who you should go to for coverage and what the premiums will cost, based on their work with a trusted broker
- Implementing everything, liaising with all parties

HR consultancy in action

Global non-profit Textile Exchange has grown from 50 employees to 130 worldwide, with staff in Canada, the UK, Sweden, France, Italy, and Spain.

Audra Bright, the Human Resources and Internal Systems Senior Manager at Textile Exchange, attributes that growth mainly to IRIS.



We wouldn't be where we are right now without IRIS."

IRIS provided not just a global HR and payroll solution but did it in a way that was accessible and easy to manage.



Everything is all in the web portal, which is amazing. I love it. It's so much easier."

Additionally, IRIS has helped them streamline their HR processes, saving them time and money.



It makes it so much easier to pull reports, house documents, etc. I can find what I need whenever I need it. The process is so much more streamlined, and I never have to deal with paperwork getting lost."

About IRIS Consulting

Two thousand organisations across the world use IRIS Consulting. These include everything from multinational corporations to non-profits.

Every business we help is different, but what they have in common is that they don't have to worry about:

- HR compliance
 - Compensation and benefits
 - The fine details of immigration and global mobility
 - The complexities of strategic M&A consulting
- All because they work with IRIS.

Helped by outstanding professionals

We have teams of UK-based HR experts. They understand everything from Education to Corporations, meaning we can help regardless of your setup or aspirations.

Meanwhile, our international specialists have 100+ years of experience between them and are fluent in nine languages.

We deliver:

- HR advisory on the entire employee lifecycle
- Best-in-class support
- Monthly subscription pricing based on employee headcount
- Help expanding abroad

Contact us and see our team in action.