Wise Tips: Choosing & Implementing an Expenses Management System
The path to finding your perfect expenses management solution

A wise man once said: “The most important part of any job, is choosing the right tool”. And when you’re job is business finance, then it’s likely that managing the process and payment of employees T&E expenses claims is a major part of it.

So, it’s great that we now have the kind of tools needed to make handling expenses a hassle-free experience; saving your company time and money. And the benefits of moving from old paper based systems to a new cloud based solution can be major. Here’s a few reasons why an expenses management solution will help you find the inner peace you’ve been seeking.
Wise man who saves his staff time also saves his business money
It can cost as much as £40 per claim to generate and process an expense report using non-automated methods. Much of this is in time soaked up by the administrative overhead. Automating processes can drive that down to as little as £4 per report within a large organisation. Overall it is anticipated that an expenses management system can save you as much as 25% in T&E processing costs and with quick, remote deployment of SaaS this saving can be realised really quickly.

He who knows the rules of expenses does not break them
Whether it’s exaggerated expenses claims, out of business policy or non-compliance, expenses management software goes a long way to preventing fraud. Statistically speaking, survey data shows that up to 40% of your employees may engage in some type of expenses fraud and that as many as 25%, do so because they feel underpaid and undervalued. Deploying an expenses management process means a fair system for all.

Enlightened man reports in real time
For financial managers expenses software offers the power of comprehensive, real time reporting capability and analysis. This is particularly useful for quickly analysing histories; for large scale businesses with multiple offices; or operating overseas with the additional complexities of multi-entities.

Despite these compelling benefits there are a number of important factors that affect decisions on supplier and influence the long term success of the project once the
solution has been rolled out. This paper outlines what you need to consider when choosing an expenses management system and provides some pointers for successful implementation.

**Part 1: Choosing an expenses management system**

**What are the specific requirements of my business?**
Some key questions relate to the needs and operational requirements of your business.

- How many claimants and approvers do you have?
- Is everyone based in one office or in multiple sites in one country?
- Do you require multi-entity capability to integrate with oversea offices?
- Do you reimburse in different currencies round the world?
- Do you want it to integrate with your existing accounting or ERP software?
- Are users going to carry out expenses claim activity from an office?
- Do users need to interact with the system on the move?
- Do you recharge expense items to clients or projects?
- Do you want to reclaim UK or overseas VAT?
- When would you like the new system in place?
- Does your business use corporate credit cards?

**What features are important?**
There are a number of expenses management systems in the marketplace and you need to decide what features you want. Popular features include:
• Input expenses via credit card integration
• Input expenses via SMS
• Input expenses in multiple locations and currencies
• Precise postcode mileage verification for journeys
• Support for your ‘Expenses Policy’ at the point the claimant is entering their claim
• Pre-trip approval, to avoid out of policy claims
• Attach electronic receipts to expenses claims
• Track your carbon footprint
• Input expenses through a Smartphone App
• Duty of care recording
• API for easy integration
• P11D compilation

**But don’t be blinded by features**
Features may be abundant; however, it is rarely about the presence or absence of a single feature. Many systems share similar features and it can come down to usability or what would work best for your organisation. Be sure to see the software in action and ‘use’ it thoroughly in a live situation.

**Customer support is key**
Customer support will help you implement your system and look after you and your employees should issues arise or you want to add new users or features. Contact customer support before you start with any pre-sales questions to see what responses you get and how quickly the support team responds. Inspect case studies and ask to speak to existing customers at referral sites.
Carbon Footprint
A new feature from some suppliers is real time carbon tracking, this allows users to input claims and see their carbon footprint from each journey. This creates awareness and delivers data to measure and reduce your organisation’s carbon footprint. With carbon reduction milestones looming, why pay more tax than you have to?

Legislation
Some systems are better for compliance purposes, for example, point of entry reminders to prompt employers to comply with laws such as the Anti-Bribery Act and corporate manslaughter legislation. You can also use some systems to help get a dispensation from HMRC for form P11D.

Flexibility
Business agility is an important attribute for businesses looking to adapt and respond to rapidly changing market conditions. It is important that the systems that support our businesses are flexible. Your expenses system needs to be able to accommodate your changing business needs. Importantly, your supplier will need to be able and willing to support changes to the system. Find out if there are any costs associated with this.

Summary
As you work through these points and decide on the features that are important to your organisation, you should be able to develop some selection criteria against which you can evaluate the potential of product and service offerings in the marketplace.
Part 2: Implementing an expenses management solution

Now you’ve got a grip on the selection criteria, there are a number of elements that you need to be aware of when planning the implementation of an expenses management software project. Some of them are related to the pure mechanics of integration - the system set up processes that need to be carried out by the supplier.

However, successful implementation is not just a matter of process and mechanics. There are other elements, somewhat less tangible, that may be termed cultural. Taken together these factors will help you assess the likely speed and gain a realistic appreciation of the time, effort and changes required to complete implementation successfully.

Mechanics

Set up data
Many service providers request system set up data from the customer in spreadsheet format. You will need to provide user details, ledger codes, mileage rates and so forth. This is then used to create a new configuration within the system in accordance with your business requirements.

Training and support
Company administrator(s) receive full training in all functions and in system maintenance and modification. Users should be provided with appropriate training and User Guides.
Roll out
On the live date, users are added to the system, at which stage they will receive a user login and password by email and be fully briefed on how to use the system.

Cultural

Expenses Management System – What next?
Now you’ve got your new expenses management software solution in place, what next? There are some cultural aspects that should be considered. It’s important that the system is not seen as ‘forced’ on users and that it becomes a wedge between finance and claimants. Remember the system is just the tool, it’s only when people use it that the business benefits are realised so it is important to gain ‘buy in’.

Support change with an Expenses Policy
To support your expenses management system it is helpful to introduce or update your Expenses Policy. With such a policy in place, all claimants and administrators clearly understand the limits of allowable expenses.

Resistance to change
We are all in some way resistant to change. Tying up your change in expenses management systems and processes with a new or refreshed Expenses Policy is likely to invite some criticism initially. It may be useful to appoint one of the finance team as a system champion, the evangelist or ‘go and see’ person that is the first port of call for every query.

The champion’s role
Part of this role should include advocacy for the benefits, reinforcing that this change
will make everyone’s life easier, and investing a little time to begin with will pay dividends very soon.

**Behavior modification and acceptance**

The statistical 40% that may have been able to abuse the paper system will find it more difficult to continue fraudulent activity. Over time, as the system beds in and users experience the benefits of cultural change, behaviour modification will lead to acceptance and cultural issues will effectively fade from prominence. An expenses management system’s purpose is to provide a fair and simple way to manage expenses.

**Proceed to expenses enlightenment**

Webexpenses is a provider of award winning web-based expenses management solutions. The software allows for unparalleled flexibility in configuration and ease of use, allowing organisations to quickly reduce travel and entertainment spending and the costs of processing expense claims. From the very start, webexpenses has had one main objective - to make expenses simple.

It is an approach that has fuelled webexpenses’ growth over the past decade; it is now the tried and tested solution for hundreds of clients throughout the world - from small organisations to large multi-nationals.
Exceeding Expectations
The foundation of webexpenses’ success has always been its powerful and robust software solution. But at the heart of the company is a commitment to exceed expectations - to go that bit further to ensure our clients’ needs are met.

Each and every one of our users, no matter how large or small the organisation, is given the same level of personal service from our client support team. This commitment has allowed webexpenses to record some of the industry’s highest ratings for customer support and a 97 percent client retention rate over the past five years.

Next Step
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