

Stoten Gillam Limited

IRIS company administration software helps Stoten Gillam to provide impressive client service

Stoten Gillam is a leading independent firm of chartered accountants, specialising in personal and corporation tax, accounts and auditing for small and medium-sized businesses

Established in 1963, the firm is based in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, with a satellite office in Luton, and serves a wide range of clients in terms of both size and activity. Stoten Gillam is a long-time user of software in the IRIS Accountancy Suite, having migrated to IRIS in 2003. The firm uses all the main IRIS Accountancy Suite modules, including the company administration products IRIS Company Secretarial and IRIS Company Formations.

A highly automated process

Stoten Gillam was one of the first firms to adopt IRIS Company Secretarial. The product had been released shortly before Stoten Gillam became an IRIS customer.

The time-saving features inherent within the software have proved so valuable over the years that if the firm takes on a new client all the relevant share history is transferred to IRIS Company Secretarial. Director Chris Trevor says, "We know we can rely on IRIS to keep track of all the information, such as director and secretary details. We don't have to keep going back to old files - it's all there on the client screen."

From then on, the process is highly automated, as Chris explains, "If anything changes, such as a director resigning, the software automatically determines in the background that a form is required to submit to Companies House. It produces the form, ready for printing, signing by the client, and filing electronically with Companies House - all at the touch of a button. In this way, registering changes within the client's company becomes a very efficient process and IRIS Company Secretarial ensures that nothing is overlooked in the busy working day. It's one less thing to have to think about."

IRIS Company Secretarial helps protect practices and their clients from the penalties or even prosecution that failure to comply with statutory requirements can incur. It includes high levels of automation and safeguards to check that a form is completed correctly. This means that less training is required and many company secretarial duties can be undertaken by administrative staff. Stoten Gillam has been able to assign routine tasks to a secretary. As the differential grows between the fees for online and paper filing, the cost-savings in using IRIS Company Secretarial are becoming significant. Practices currently save £26 on each client annual return filed electronically.

High-speed incorporations

With a forward-looking approach to using technology to increase efficiency, Stoten Gillam was also an early adopter of IRIS Company Formations. The software resolved a long-standing issue for the firm, as Chris recalls, "Using a formation agent introduces a middleman; this inevitably extends the process and increases the likelihood of errors."

Using IRIS software has brought measurable benefits: "The IRIS Company Formations wizard makes the whole process quick and easy. It includes prompts and checks along the way to ensure nothing is missed. We do a review, press the button and off it goes, electronically submitted to

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Companies House, with no opportunity for anything to get lost in the post. If we do this in the morning, the company may well be formed by the afternoon. We've reduced the time to form a company down to a couple of hours in some cases, depending on how quickly Companies House can respond."

"Clients are very impressed at the speed with which we can set up a company for them, particularly if they're in a hurry to open a company bank account. We can print out the certificate of incorporation and the memorandum and articles on the correct stationery for them to show the bank."

Faster processing brings another client benefit: "We may occasionally have to advise a client not to try to register their preferred name because our checks show its similarity to an existing name. If they still want to give it a try, at least no time has been lost if Companies House rejects it. We'll know within a few hours. It all adds up to good client service."

Once again, there is a significant cost-saving in filing electronically, rather than on paper. Stoten Gillam can save up to £70 on some Companies House fees, in addition to eliminating formation agent costs.

Practices using IRIS Company Formations buy credits to form companies as required. Credits have no expiry date, so practitioners have a clear understanding of the cost of forming a company. This, in turn, helps in setting an appropriate charge to their customers. Stoten Gillam buys a batch of 25 credits at a time.

Some practices form companies in bulk to have them ready and waiting 'on the shelf', but Chris says, "We don't do this as it's so easy to set up an actual company from scratch with all the correct data."

"It just works"

Having the single, integrated IRIS database means that once the new company is formed, data such as the company registration number is available for use by other modules in the IRIS Accountancy Suite. "IRIS Company Formations has proved a natural extension to the IRIS software we were already using. The information entered in forming the company flows into the annual return, accounts, letters produced through IRIS AutoMail, and so on without any need to rekey. This again saves time and increases accuracy."

While staff at Stoten Gillam know that IRIS support is only a phone call away should advice ever be needed, Chris says, "We've needed very little support - it just works!"

Solution summary

- *Data entered for company administration is shared by other IRIS software*
- *Efficiency increased by eliminating rekeying*
- *Prompts and checks reduce rejections by Companies House*
- *Automation saves time and allows routine company secretarial tasks to be delegated*
- *Impressively fast online company formations*