



inside ...

Customer Conference – 3rd and 4th July

Training – New schedule announced

New starters – Introducing 3 new starters

Ask Alison – Hints and Tips

Customer Photographs – Win a box of sweets or chocolates

Did you know? Unpaid parental leave extended

Religion or belief in the Workplace – Intro to the new EHRC Guide

HMRC are not alone! – What other bodies affect the work we do in Payroll and HR

People Matters Column – Employee Appraisals

RTI Checklists – Now available

Profile on John Mustard

Competition News – chance to win from a choice of prizes

New HR and Payroll Manuals available – for Miracle Enterprise
Calendar of Events

www.miracle-dynamics.com

welcome to the miracle newsletter

In the February issue I started off by saying “I’m wondering if we are going to make our RTI seminars in Glasgow because of the snow” and now I’m sitting writing this for our April newsletter wondering if I can get out of my drive because of the snow! Roll on Summer.

We have a lot to look forward to over the coming months, your last year end, your first RTI return, the implementation of the new pension regulations and most important of all, our Customer Conference on 3rd and 4th July and our Reseller Conferences on 11th July and 19th September. Customers should have received their ‘Save the Date’ card by now and formal invitations will be sent out shortly. Places are limited so make sure you book early to avoid disappointment.

March was a busy month for Miracle with year end releases. All the new legislation has increased our workload significantly and with the continued expansion of our business, we took on three new starters and additional office space.

We appreciate this can be a very stressful time with year end, RTI and pension regulations, so please do contact us if you need any help or advice.

Best Regards

Alan Frost

Customer Conference



Hopefully all our customers should have received a 'Save the Date' Card for our Customer Conference which is taking place on 3rd and 4th July at the magnificent Coombe Abbey in Binley, Warwickshire.

Coombe Abbey is set in 500 acres of parkland, overlooking formal gardens and a tranquil lake. It was originally built as a Cistercian Abbey in the 12th Century and has been lovingly restored to its former glory by its current owners 'No Ordinary Hotels'. This event is the first of its type that we have run and we hope to see many of our customers there. It will be a great opportunity to learn more about new developments within Miracle and our products, understand new technologies, learn about legislation and how it affects your Miracle solution, hints and tips, network with other Miracle users and of course a chance to meet the Miracle team.

In addition to this, we have guests attending from the CIPP, an RTI update from HMRC and a Pension update from the Pension Regulator. You will also have the chance to attend 4 practical workshops from a choice of 12 and the chance to book one to one meetings with key Miracle staff.

The cost of the event is £255 per person and includes dinner, drinks, entertainment, accommodation, breakfast, lunch and refreshments. We will be sending invitations out shortly with instructions on how to register. Places are limited, so be sure to book early. However if you would like to register your interest in the meantime, please email sales@miracle-dynamics.com.

We promise that the event will be a mixture of solid practical advice and guidance along with some good old fashioned fun!

Are you getting the most out of your Miracle Solution? Updated Training Schedule Announced!



Software issues create unproductive time, which is costing businesses money they can ill afford to lose. Many businesses in an effort to save money are actually reducing training budgets, however these kind of cost cutting exercises only cause issues that ultimately increase costs.

Increased knowledge and improved software usability eases employee frustration and empowers users to solve issues more quickly. Our training courses are designed to help users exploit all the functionality within their Miracle Solution and are run by specialists who have an in-depth knowledge of the product.

We want our customers to get the most out of their Miracle Solution. Sometimes users forget their initial training or get used to working in a specific way, so it's important to refresh your knowledge to keep up to date with new features and functionality.

We run standard training courses at our offices in Tewkesbury, which are detailed on our calendar of events or we can run bespoke on-site training courses if you have specific needs.

We have recently introduced some Masterclasses to our training schedule including Flexible Pay Analysis,

Entitlements and Management of the HR Disciplinary process. Our Flexible Pay Analysis Masterclass proved to be a very useful session and in fact Wendy Davies of Taylor Shaw managed to save 2 days of manual imputing as a result of attending. Wendy said *"I found this course to be very useful and it helped me massively in our day to day procedures. I learnt how to import the hours for 2 of our payrolls which saved us 2 days of manual imputing. I also picked up some helpful tips on report writing. It's surprising how much you think you know about this software until quicker ways of getting results are pointed out to you"*.



If you are interested in any of our **training courses**, please contact Sheila Wallett Sheila.wallett@miracle-dynamics.com or visit our website.



New Starters

As our business continues to expand, we have taken on the following new starters. We would like to welcome them to Miracle and wish them every success in the future with their new roles.

Stacy Reynolds

Stacy Reynolds joins Miracle as a Sales and Administration Supervisor. Prior to joining Miracle, Stacy worked for Travis Perkins as a PA to the Sales Director and Regional Director, where she was responsible for supporting the large sales team and looking after their regional branches.

Amongst other duties, Stacy will be responsible for setting up and managing our new CRM system, looking after and controlling our documents, assisting with training courses and seminar administration, assisting with and improving the mailshot process and managing reseller relationships.

Stacy is looking forward to putting her strong organisational skills to good use and providing our customers and resellers with a first class service.

Stacy enjoys cooking for her family and friends, watching films and socialising.

Monika Chludzinska

Monika joins Miracle as a Junior Developer, where she will be responsible for developing application code, testing developed code, documenting developments and providing support to the Help Desk and delivery teams.

Prior to joining Miracle, Monika worked for Speed Medical Examination Services as a Junior Developer and Accounts Assistant, where she used her SQL, Jet Reports, Reporting Services and NAV 2009 development skills. Prior to this role Monika was a Maths teacher and a Customs Agent.

Monika is highly motivated and is looking forward to progressing her career in the Microsoft Dynamics NAV world. She enjoys skiing, swimming, sailing, surfing and board games.

Yonis Smith

Last but by no means least, Yonis Smith joins Miracle as a Developer. Yonis will be responsible for developing programs within our product range in line with business requirement specifications and the needs of our product roadmap. Amongst other duties, Yonis will also be reviewing new NAV techniques and technologies, providing assistance to our Help Desk, looking at system optimisation and creating and implementing test plans. Yonis has been working with Microsoft Dynamics NAV for over ten years now and joins us with experience from both a customer and reseller perspective. Yonis's two most recent roles have been working for Microsoft Dynamics NAV customers Dreams PLC and Sony Music both in Development posts. Prior to this Yonis worked for a large NAV reseller - K3, where he held various roles.

Yonis is a dedicated NAV enthusiast and is looking forward to putting his in-depth knowledge into good use at Miracle. Yonis enjoys travelling, cooking and experimenting with many different types of cuisine and speaks German at an advanced level.

Ask Alison?



Alison Firth, one of our Senior Consultants shares some handy hints and tips with you, we hope you find them useful.

RTI - Employer Alignment

Submissions will not be accepted if you haven't been invited to send one. Some users have not received their invitation letter yet. If you haven't received yours, contact HMRC or check their website for advice.

DPS - If you haven't done so already, don't forget to register for electronic notifications on the Government Gateway so you can use the DPS functionality. This will enable automatic updates to your Payroll software including P6, P9 and Student Loans, as well as RTI information - you can run as a report first to check before updating.

Contracted Hours - This information needs to be entered for all employees who have contracted hours to ensure that RTI submits the Employee in the correct hours band. Check your user manual if you are unsure where it should be entered. If you have employees with no contracted hours i.e. casual or zero hours, these should be indicated as such.

Customer Photographs

We are currently collecting customer photographs to use as wall art in our offices. We are having the images printed onto canvases to use in a montage. We would be very grateful to receive a photograph with your company name on it, for example your company building with your name or logo or perhaps a photo of the product your business sells. Any photo sent in will receive a large box of chocolates or sweets as a thank you! Please send your images or photographs to Amanda - Amanda.sibley@miracle-dynamics.com.



Did you know?

The right to unpaid parental leave has been extended ...

From 8th March, the right to unpaid parental leave for parents with children under the age of five has now been extended from 13 to 18 weeks.

This means that a parent is entitled to 18 weeks leave per child up to their 5th birthday. If the child is adopted the entitlement is 18 weeks up to their 18th birthday or 5th anniversary of their adoption (whichever comes first) and for a child that qualifies for Disability Living Allowance the entitlement is 18 weeks up to their 18th birthday.

The limit on how much parental leave can be taken in one year is four weeks (unless otherwise agreed by an employer).



Religion or belief in the Workplace

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has recently published a guide for employers on Religion or belief in the workplace. This is in light of the recent European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgement in four combined cases. One of the cases saw an employee have her human rights breached by her employer when she was not allowed to wear a cross to work. UK courts had previously ruled that she had not been discriminated against on grounds of religion; however the European Court of Human Rights found that her religious expression had been unfairly restricted by her employer.

The topic of belief in the workplace, whether it's religious or non-religious is open to much debate. Some organisations choose to put special provisions in place over and above the core legal requirements; however businesses should at the very least understand how to comply with the Court's judgement when recognising and managing the expression of religion or belief in the workplace.

The new EHRC guide is aimed at helping employers navigate requests in relation to religion or beliefs in the workplace. The Commission supports an individuals' right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and to conditional protection of the right to express religion or belief. It seeks to promote a balanced approach to recognising and managing religion or belief issues at work and to help employers and employees find reasonable solutions. Wherever possible it seeks to avoid complex, costly and damaging litigation. EHRC urge employers to take the following issues into account:

- How will an employer know if a religion or belief is genuine?
- What kind of religion or belief requests will an employer need to consider?

- What steps should an employer take to deal with a request?
- What questions should employers ask to ensure their approach to a religion or belief request is justified?
- Do employees now have the right to promote their particular religion or belief when at work?
- Can employees refrain from work duties?

To ensure that issues of religion or belief in the workplace are addressed appropriately, it is advisable for businesses to keep relevant company policies and procedures under review. They may need to adapt to changes in employee make-up. Policies need to be reviewed to ensure they are not directly or indirectly discriminatory against staff holding particular beliefs including non-religious. If they are discriminatory can reasonable changes be made?

Be open and concise with employees, if requests are not possible explain the business reasons behind the decision and try to find a solution that is reasonable. Modern businesses and managers not only have to know the law but also work within it. At the same time they need to be effective and ensure their businesses are thriving. If everyone is able to appreciate the differences in people and their beliefs and understand them without being biased, this will help to create a workplace free of adverse discrimination.

If you are interested in the guide written by the EHRC "Religion or belief in the Workplace" - you can visit their website to download it, go to the advice and guidance section - www.equalityhumanrights.com. The guide includes a selection of examples of requests and how employers might deal with them.



Samantha Mann, MAAT, MCIPP Dip

Welcome to Samantha Mann our Guest Writer from the CIPP (The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals)

Samantha is the Senior Policy and Research Officer at the CIPP. Sam joined the CIPP team with over 30 years of experience working in payroll in the SME sector.

At the time of writing this article we are in the final countdown towards the go live of PAYE in real time, more commonly known as RTI, and so HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are very much the key government department whose regulations, instruction, guidance and helplines are dominating our days.

In fact, we could be forgiven for thinking the same in most years. However, HMRC are not the only government department that is responsible for educating us as to our responsibilities under the law and for ensuring that we comply with legislation that is aimed at the employer and impacts on the Payroll and HR function.

This article aims to take a look (albeit briefly) at other government departments, agencies and legislators whose work and policies also impact on our working days.

Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)

- is responsible for a range of different government policy that impact on all areas of society, but specifically for the employer, their welfare, child maintenance and pension policies makes them a key player with the potential to impact significantly on our working lives. To name but a few subjects, they are currently responsible for policy in the areas of Pension Reform; child maintenance collection; (via the Child Maintenance Group) and the collection of welfare debt - from employees who are no longer in receipt of any benefits - by way of Direct

HMRC are not alone!

Earnings Attachment (as from April 2013).

The DWP are also responsible for setting policy for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) (and Maternity Allowance), Adoption Pay (SAP) and Paternity Pay (SPP). The DWP isn't however responsible for education or enforcement on these subjects, this role, you will be aware, falls to HMRC.

Setting policy for Statutory Sick Pay also falls to the DWP and whilst education and enforcement on the employer falls to HMRC, more recently we have seen the updated guidance being issued by DWP on the subject of the Fit Note. The guides are aimed at all affected stakeholders e.g. employers, employees and GPs, amongst others, to clarify the role of the Fit Note in concentrating on what work and activity an employee can do if they fall ill, rather than what they can't and looking to recognise the wider benefit of encouraging an employee back to work as soon as possible.

We can't move away from the DWP without acknowledging the proposed change to the benefits system in the form of Universal Credits. The policy of this falls to DWP and I feel confident in saying that we will return to this subject again in the future as the DWP launch the Universal Credit pathfinder in the North West from April 2013.

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) - the TPR has been empowered by the government to be the UK regulator of work-based pensions. They provide guidance and education to trustees, employers, pension specialists, as well as business advisors to make clear what is expected from all stakeholders in the provision and administration of work-based pensions. They also have a role to play in enforcement where employers or other stakeholders fail to meet their legislative obligations. Their website should very much take pride of place in your 'favourites' list as it provides a full range of education and guidance material to all stakeholders on the subject of Auto Enrolment.

The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS)

- is the government department that impacts on the employer in its aim to create better regulation. There are several policy areas of BIS operations that impact significantly on the employer, but most commonly we would look to BIS for policy on Maternity, Paternity and Adoption leave, along with broader employment relations issues such as flexible leave, TUPE, and the National

Minimum Wage (NMW) along with Redundancy leave and pay.

The Low Pay Commission advises government on the NMW including making recommendations for rates to apply from October each year.

The Cabinet Office - isn't a government department that we normally look to mention in an article about the work of Payroll or HR, however, the 2012 budget included the commitment that all government services would become digital by default. The Cabinet Office are responsible for ensuring delivery of the Government Digital Strategy. This is another area that we predict will impact on news articles of the future.

In addition to government departments, we can also look to the local authorities and the courts, as they issue to us pay attachments to collect a range of different payments from the pay of our employees - council tax and fines to name a couple.

Finally, let us not also forget the Employment Tribunals and the legal Courts, both UK and European as they make legal decisions that can and do impact on our domestic legislation and of course those of the European Commission.

As part of the digital strategy, the GOV.UK website which replaces the previous Directgov and Businesslink websites, aims to be the single web entry for all of the UK government. It currently informs us that 14 of 24 Ministerial departments have recently merged their websites in to the government section of this website and so can now be accessed directly via www.gov.uk. It goes on further to say that 17 of 300+ other departments and public bodies are also live on GOV.UK.

With these numbers alone we can conclude this article, safe in the knowledge that whilst not all of those departments and public bodies will impact either directly or indirectly on the employer, we know that many of them will! So, when real time goes live and concludes its teething issues, that any new system of this size and complexity inevitably experiences, and when the final staging date is reached for Auto Enrolment, it is safe to assume that the government will continue to provide those of us working within Payroll and HR functions with further challenges aplenty.



People Matters Column with Vicky Stanton

We would like to welcome our guest writer Vicky Stanton, who gives us advice on 'Employee Appraisals'.

It's about that time of year when Managers and employees start to dread the word 'appraisal' popping up in email or conversation. Why is that? Is it because they don't see the point? They don't see any value in them? They are a stressful process which is time consuming and confrontational? Or it's just an inconvenience stopping them from doing their real job?

The annual appraisal is maybe the only time since last year that the manager and the appraisee have sat down together for a meaningful one-to-one discussion. No wonder then that appraisals are stressful - which then defeats the whole purpose.

So what's the answer?

Meaningful, regular discussions about work, career aspirations, progress and development and don't forget the social side of life. In fact whatever the two wish to talk about is ok and starts a process that means the appraisal process becomes less stressful and is dealt with much quicker as the conclusion of an on going process with two people who know and trust each other.

So are performance appraisals still beneficial and appropriate?

Appraisals, in whatever form they take (and there are lots of forms) have been a mainstay for management for years and for good reason. There are many things that appraisals can contribute to and achieve when they are managed effectively, including;

- Measuring performance in a transparent way - short, medium and long term
- Motivation through achievement and feedback
- Setting and re establishing goals and aims of an individual and team
- Career and succession planning - both personal and organisational
- Employee growth and development
- Organisational training needs assessment and analysis

In a working world, where less time is spent on face to face discussions and more time on email, texting and conference calling, performance appraisals offer an opportunity to protect and manage these face to face opportunities.

There are many different ways of conducting appraisals, from traditional appraisals and forms, 360 degree appraisals to nothing more than a blank piece of paper.

However, whichever method you choose to use there are some simple tips for making them as effective as possible;

- Make sure senior managers are committed and supportive of the scheme
- Keep the process as simple as possible - the more elaborate the scheme the more likely it is to fail and become discredited
- Provide training and guidance to all involved - train the managers who will conduct the appraisals and give guidance to those who are the appraisees
- Make sure that managers carry out the appraisals they are required to do (after all, people management and development is an integral part of a manager's job)
- It is a two way process ie. both the manager and the appraisee get their turn to speak and contribute

- Do not cause any surprises ie. if there are performance matters to be dealt with do not leave them until appraisal time. Make sure they are dealt with at the time they occur. It is of course appropriate to document it in the summary of the year's performance

If the appraisal process is seen as a positive process where employees can raise realistic development requirements, career aspirations and concerns and see action being taken, and managers have a useful tool to praise staff, discuss development needs and consider future succession planning then it is more likely that the process will be embraced by all as an effective tool for all concerned.

On another subject.....

The most talked-about small business announcement from Budget 2013 is the implementation of a new 'Employment Allowance', which will reduce firms' Employers' NI bills by up to £2,000 from April 2014.

Vicky Stanton
Inspiring People Solutions Ltd

inspiring@talktalk.net
www.inspiringpeoplesolutions.net



RTI Checklists

We have recently sent out RTI checklists for our MiraclePay Lite, Enterprise and Progress customers. The checklist has been provided as a reminder of the key steps that must be taken before you start to generate Real Time Information (RTI) submissions.

You must have completed your 2013/14 year end upgrade before the start of the new tax year as this contains the RTI

functionality. We suggest you use this checklist in conjunction with the release notes.

If you haven't received your copy, please contact Amanda Sibley who will be happy to send you one -
Amanda.sibley@miracle-dynamics.com.

Good luck with your RTI submissions!

Competition time



For our April competition, we would like our readers to send in a duck joke.

The joke that gets the most laughs in our office will win a prize of their choice from the following list:

- IPOD 5th Generation 16MB
- Kindle Fire
- Case of Wine
- £100 Amazon Voucher
- Red Letter Day - Dinner and Theatre for 2 in London

Please send your entry to sales@miracle-dynamics.com before end of Tuesday 30th April.

Competition Winner

Congratulations to Linda McKenna from ScS who won the competition from our February Issue.

We asked for some duck suggestions for our Customer Conference on 4th July. Linda suggested a duck draped in the American Flag as the conference is taking place on American Independence Day. We couldn't find the exact duck Linda described, however we would like to introduce you to American Mike, who will be joining us at the Customer Conference!

Thank you Linda for your entry, we are now going to theme the whole conference around your idea! Linda chose a Kindle Fire for her prize.



Meet John Mustard



Meet John Mustard, one of our Senior Consultants. Some say he looks like Tom Selleck (well one person who was a little tipsy at the time) and some compare him to Omar Sharif (we're not sure if John is making this up). At Miracle, we simply call him the Geordie.

John is a Senior Developer at Miracle and he entered the world of computing in 1982 as a TOPS trainee and worked for ICL based in Reading. Having spent so many years in the deep south his Geordie accent is barely noticeable (so he says...!) When John was with ICL he travelled to support projects in far flung places such as Australia and Switzerland, Miracle have sent him to exotic locations as far afield as Avonmouth and Sunderland.

John joined the Miracle group of companies in 1999 from ICL/Fujitsu to support a manufacturing package which the company took over the support function for. Within a couple of years, John was retrained on Navision and became involved in the conversion and further development of the MiraclePay product.

As a vital member of the team (so vital that at a recent company event no one noticed he had been left behind, which he is happy to point out to all!) John has been involved in the development of many of the enhancements to our product range.

On the occasions, he has been let out of his development box, John is also involved in support, implementations, upgrades and training (although we

usually send a translator with him on such events). He is also dusted off and sent on site to assist on those projects where complex issues arise. We do encourage him to dress appropriately whilst on site and shortly after he joined, we did have to introduce a dress code into our company handbook to ban Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts!

We keep telling him he enjoys his work and we think we have him convinced. He is actually proud of the fact that over the years he has enhanced or adjusted most areas of the system. He would be able to tell you the ID of any table in the miracle range given the name!

John likes to describe himself as a skydiving fitness fanatic somewhat reminiscent of James Bond. The truth is, his only likeness to James Bond is that he once stayed in hotel room 007 near Warrington. John did actually attempt a parachute jump for charity, however he was so badly coordinated that they insisted he did a tandem jump rather than a solo jump.

John considers himself quite amusing, we have it on good authority from his wife that he isn't! He is best described as a TV & film addict (he doesn't like to be called a coach potato). He also enjoys DIY although if pressed is willing to admit he hasn't had a 100% success rate with his projects. Although not an avid football fan he does like to see Newcastle & Reading do well. John lives in the North East with his wife and son. He also has a daughter and two grandchildren.

NEW! – Payroll and HR Manuals for MiraclePay Enterprise

We are delighted to announce that we have new Payroll and HR Manuals for Miracle Enterprise. These are available to download from our FTP site, however please note they are large files as they are over 600 pages and include many screenshots. Please contact our office if you don't have a login to our FTP site. The manuals are also available in hard copy, however they are chargeable to cover our printing costs. If you would like a hard copy, they are £150.00 each, please email your request to sales@miracle-dynamics.com.

Sheila Walleth is pictured here with our new manuals. You may notice, she is dressed as a duck! For those that are new to Miracle, we do like ducks and you will see them featured in training courses, conferences, seminars and newsletters!



Please note all our events will be taking place at our offices in Tewkesbury unless otherwise stated.

April

- 25th - Pension Seminar – Glasgow
- 26th - Pension Seminar Glasgow

May

- 16th - Pension Seminar

June

- 4th and 5th - MiraclePay Standard Training Course
- 6th - Flexible Pay Analysis Masterclass
- 20th & 21st - MiraclePeople Standard Training Course
- 24th - P11D Training Course
- 25th & 26th - MiraclePeople Advanced Training Course
- 27th and 28th - MiraclePay Advanced Training Course

July

- 3rd - Customer Conference Dinner and Entertainment (PM Only) – Binley, Warwickshire
- 4th - Customer Conference – Binley, Warwickshire
- 9th & 10th - MiraclePeople Standard Training Course
- 11th - Reseller Conference
- 18th - Pension Seminar
- 24th - MiracleTime Training Course
- 25th & 26th - MiraclePay Standard Training Course

August

- 13th - HR Disciplinary Process Masterclass
- 14th & 15th - MiraclePeople Advanced Training Course
- 29th & 30th - MiraclePay Advanced Training Course

September

- 5th - Pension Seminar
- 10th - P11D Training Course
- 11th & 12th - MiraclePeople Standard Training Course
- 19th - Reseller Conference
- 26th & 27th - MiraclePay Standard Training Course

October

- 15th - MiracleTime Training Course
- 16th & 17th - MiraclePeople Advanced Training Course
- 29th - Entitlements Masterclass
- 30th & 31st - MiraclePay Advanced Training Course

November

- 13th & 14th - MiraclePeople Standard Training Course
- 21st - Pension Seminar
- 28th & 29th - MiraclePay Standard Training Course



Miracle House, 12 Miller Court, Severn Drive, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 8DN
 tel: 0845 634 5015 fax: 0808 280 0048 helpdesk: 0845 634 2946
 email: sales@miracle-dynamics.com www.miracle-dynamics.com