



VAT | the individual approach

team



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VAT stands apart from other taxes and other accounting issues. It is more about what your business does for its customers than what accounting treatments you adopt. The exact nature of your activities, and your operational set up, have a fundamental bearing on the VAT treatment, more so than on the accounting treatment or on calculation of a profit for a direct tax liability. This means that generalisations are dangerous in VAT, and the devil is always in the detail. We appreciate this fact and treat each client and its business as an individual case with individual client needs, rather than as a kind of category.

For this reason, we regard it as particularly important to get to know what you are doing in detail, and to get to understand how you approach your business and how your business is organised. For the same reason, we understand that providing advice on the level of theoretical or abstract concepts is not particularly useful for VAT. We seek wherever possible to pin down the issue so that our advice can be specific and can provide you with a practical route to achieving a definite objective. Whilst we will usually provide you with various choices, and the decision between them must finally be a decision for you, we will also tell you which of the choices we think is better or more viable, and tell you why.

We understand VAT law, but we also emphasize issues of feasibility, commerciality, and organisational structure. We always seek to understand what you wish to achieve from any exercise, and what the commercial impact on your organisation would be in any given circumstance. We do not want to carry out a research project. What we want to do is to help you with your VAT.

what kind of help do you need?

Different people approach VAT from various different angles, or a mixture of several. The following are examples:

- **reassurance that they comply:** the main aim here is to avoid unwanted surprises. Our VAT group has a full time VAT manager resource in a person who spent fifteen years carrying our assurance with HM Revenue & Customs, in a large trader capacity, and who has a great deal of experience in ensuring that VAT systems and approaches give a high degree of confidence.
- **achieving the least VAT cost with their existing arrangements:** our two senior advisers, at partner and director level, are adept in analysing your existing arrangements, and your approach to accounting for VAT both on sales and purchases, and suggesting approaches that will improve your VAT efficiency. These can range from challenging a charge of VAT on supplies made by your business, to challenging the level of VAT recovery that you make on costs.
- **re-arranging activities to save VAT:** over the last several years the degree of scope offered for "VAT planning" has reduced significantly in line with government policy to the effect that "avoidance" is scarcely more acceptable than "evasion". The key issue is to have an understanding of what can be practically implemented that has a high chance of success in reducing VAT costs, as distinct from extremely risky approaches which are almost certain to attract unwanted aggressive attention from HMRC. We look at the situation on the individual merits of individual cases, and on the whole, any reorganisation in that context will often be acceptable. It is not our approach to offer pre-packaged solutions to questions you may never even have asked yourself.
- **help with VAT accounting:** we complete VAT returns, Intrastats, and European Sales Listings for certain clients either through our VAT team or through our business support service unit. In addition, we have access to the services of a consultant whose sole focus is in carrying out large scale exercises computing claims for businesses which have ignored a potential avenue (usually in the area of partial exemption). This consultant can carry out all of the work required in order to make a claim.
- **transaction support advice:** perhaps the most important area of our business is supporting clients through unusual situations or particularly high value or unfamiliar transactions. Our very experienced two senior team members in particular can provide rapid response and, where needed, "deal day advice", and have proven track records in analysing highly complicated situations

presented by transactions. Queries of a less complex and more general nature can be answered by other members of the team.

our team

There are four people in our VAT group who work full-time on VAT, and a further consultant who assists on reclaim work. The four full-time members are wholly engaged on VAT issues. They range from a relatively junior grade, with a few years of experience in HMRC, up to the two most senior individuals who both have well in excess of 20 years of experience in VAT. All four are professionally qualified.

specialisms

We advise on all areas of VAT, but we have particular expertise in the following:

- property and construction
- the not for profit sector
- arts and sports
- international services

For further information please contact a member of our team.

about haysmacintyre

haysmacintyre, Chartered Accountants and tax advisers, comprises 24 partners and 160 staff based in Holborn, London. It provides high quality external and internal auditing and assurance, business and personal taxation, corporate finance, financial planning and other business support services.

Around 40% of the firm's business is within the corporate sector – small and medium sized enterprises, many of which are in the property, media and entertainment, technology, sports and business services sectors. The firm acts for a number of listed companies and assists new companies raise initial funds on the capital markets and through private equity. 35% of the firm's business is for charitable and not for profit organisations and the remainder is for professional practices and private individuals – whether senior executives, entrepreneurs or those with significant land or wealth at home or overseas.

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