



The
**Conscious
Accountant**

Virtual Finance Office

Effective management of your
business' finance function



Financial management – aaargh!!

When you set up your business things were relatively simple. No employees, hardly any transactions, no one to answer to.

Then you started to grow and things changed. You had to hire people, trust that they knew what they were doing and rely on them for advice on areas that were not your forte.

One of those areas was finance.

However, you find it difficult to find the right people at a level you can afford to give you the advice and financial management you require.

As a result you try and get by with what you have and it all gets a bit overwhelming. You don't have as close a grip on your finances as you would like and little help around you.

Your business has grown in size yet you cannot afford to hire a Finance Director as the going rate is between £75,000 - £120,000.

Even Financial Controllers salaries are no less than £45,000 plus tax and benefits.

You know you need to systemise and use technology better but not sure how and where to start.

Your staff in finance only have limited experience and you're unsure whether they are actually running the finance function of your business efficiently and making use of technology to streamline matters.



The consequence

The result is that you sail along not really knowing whether your business could be doing better, trying to manage your finances yourself without any assistance from financial experts.

That takes your time and energy away from doing what you're good at. Meeting customers, generating enquiries, driving your business forward.

You worry about meeting financial obligations like taxes as you don't have real time cash flow forecasts to refer to.

Your staff are content to continue the old ways of working as they are not aware of how things could do be done smarter or more efficiently. It is not in their interests to save you time!

You're not sure whether you are profit making until after the year end when your accountant prepares the accounts as you don't get accurate management accounts. All a little too late by then.

Your business is not giving you the financial return you hoped for when you set up your business.

You don't have financial systems in place that you feel confident in.

You don't have a business plan or KPI's to measure performance so that you can build the business of your dreams.

In short, you feel alone...

The problem

When a business gets to a certain size and can afford to, they start to hire qualified finance staff to take care of the increased finance requirements of the business.

The problem is, for small businesses, they simply cannot afford to hire the right level of finance support they need.

“Your staff in finance only have limited experience and you're unsure whether they are actually running the finance function of your business efficiently.”



According to the indeed.com the average salaries for the following roles are:

- **Accounts payable clerk:** £22,535
- **Accounts receivable clerk:** £23,861
- **Bookkeeper:** £22,996
- **Senior accountant:** £33,932
- **Financial Controller:** £54,829
- **Finance Director:** £82,439

To employ all of the above would cost a whopping £240,592! And these are before bonuses, benefits, pension contributions and employer's national insurance of 13.8%!

Clearly this is out of reach for most small businesses and a huge financial commitment. However it's exactly these small businesses that need access to this level of finance input the MOST!

Granted, as a small business you wouldn't need to employ all of the above roles on a full time basis.

However, you do need the expertise of each of those roles at some level. The problem is you can't employ 46% of an accounts payable clerk, 35% of an accounts receivable clerk, 35% of a financial controller, 10% of a finance director etc. You get the gist.

So you end up employing one or two people with some finance experience which either means:

- 1. You end up with highly skilled people covering and doing low skilled work** i.e Financial Controllers doing accounts payable and bookkeeping
- 2. You have gaps in your finance function because the people you employ do not have the skill set required** i.e. bookkeeper not being able to do what a finance director would.

That's where we can help.

The solution

Imagine if you had someone to fully implement, systemise and manage the finance function of your business so that:

- ✓ **You wouldn't need to worry** about your financial management anymore
- ✓ **You'd have access to FD and FC level support at a fraction of the cost** of employing them full or part time
- ✓ **Your in house staff would have access to training and support** from qualified finance professionals
- ✓ **You would save time and money** by having access to the latest technology to streamline your processes
- ✓ **You would get insight into the financials of your business** to help you make better, meaningful and timely decisions on moving your business forward

✓ **You would have access to real time management information** that was accurate and gave you access to all possible financing options for growth

✓ **You could scale your business up** knowing that your finance function was in good hands and could scale with you.

✓ **You would have access to a trusted advisor** who understands your business as a sounding board

Cue, the Virtual Finance Office.



The Virtual Finance Office

We provide a bespoke Virtual Finance Office service to small businesses at often, less than the cost of a full time junior staff member.

Don't let the word 'virtual' put you off. It may be techy sounding but our service is very much based around the human element – and giving you access to our team of experienced Finance professionals who have managed the entire finance function for other businesses like yours.

We can provide the full finance function from bookkeeper to FD and anything in between or complement your existing team with the elements that are missing.

What does a typical finance function look like?

The traditional 'finance function' would have had the following elements / departments:

- 1. Accounts receivable** – responsible for invoicing and collecting cash from customers
- 2. Accounts payable** – responsible for paying suppliers and employees
- 3. Financial reporting and control** – responsible for implementing the systems into which the data is entered and extracted in the form of management accounts for analysis
- 4. Working capital management** – responsible for managing cash flow and setting up systems for stock management
- 5. Forecasting and budgeting** – responsible for setting up budgeting and variance analysis between actual and budget

6. Strategic and financial planning – responsible for giving meaning to the figures, tracking KPI's and managing the business' financial risk

7. Tax and compliance – responsible for compliance with tax and regulatory bodies like HMRC and Companies House.

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Large companies would have a whole team of people to make up the business' finance function covering each of the above areas – from accounts payable and receivable staff to financial controllers and CFO's.

Smaller businesses would typically only have a limited number of people to handle all of the above functions if any at all – sometimes it's just the owner together with non-finance professionals that try and get by.

Although small businesses don't need a whole team of people to cover all of the above, they do need cover in all of the above finance function areas to some extent.

Problem is, it's not normally within reach of most small businesses to get the optimum level of cover in each of the finance function areas that they need.

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We can provide the full finance function from bookkeeper to FD and anything in between or complement your existing team with the elements that are missing.

So what benefits can a Virtual Finance Office bring to you?

Fundamentally, our VFO offering can give you cover in all of the above fundamental finance function areas in line with your business needs and at an investment your business can afford.

Furthermore, another main benefit is the comfort of being able to hand responsibility of managing your finance function to someone else to let you concentrate on what you're good at and growing your business.

Technology these days has made it possible for firms like ours to provide a full finance function offering to our entrepreneurial small business clients.

It's essentially a combination of a full finance team, business coach and strategic financial expert partnering up with you to help you achieve your business objectives.

Other benefits include:

- **Taking away the hassle of managing your own bookkeeping** and ensuring that it's done regularly and accurately so you don't miss out on tax reliefs and all eligible VAT paid.
- **Synchronisation of your financial data with your business objectives** to ensure you receive useful management information to help you make better decisions
- **Provision of real time management information** with analysis in a timely manner
- **Strategic financial input** on growing your business
- **Access to the latest technology** to streamline your operations and save time and money
- **Having finance staff report** to someone who can hold them to account
- **Assistance with helping you obtain finance** to grow your business
- **Helping you to build a profitable and sustainable business** by charting out a plan and measuring KPI's
- **Managing financial risk in your business** that may otherwise catch you unaware

What is your investment?

Every business is unique. Your objectives and requirements will be different to another business owner's. You will be at a different stage in your business compared to the another.

So, we provide you with a range of options so you can choose the package that best meets with your needs.

For each of those packages we give you a fixed monthly price so you can budget and plan. And each of these packages can be tailored so you get what you want.

In other words you're in complete control and can build the Virtual Finance Office package that best meets your needs and budget

It allows you to scale up the service as you grow and scale down if you retract. In other words it's fully flexible.

Contrast that with having to employ finance professionals whether or not you fully need them and you will see the savings you can achieve.

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How do we deliver this?

Managing a finance function these days is no mean feat.

However, technology has come a long way in automating many of the processes that used to be carried out by employed staff. Reviewing how you manage your finance function can save you time and potentially a lot of money.

Technology enables us to fully deliver and manage your finance function completely remotely although we can combine this with on-site visits as required for training purposes.

You can tailor how much on site contact you would like from us when you are selecting your options and packages.

An example of a modern and efficient finance function using available technology that help to automate and drive efficiencies can be seen here.



Your options at a glance

Whatever the stage of your business, you will find one of our Virtual Finance Office packages to suit your needs. The table below summarises what is included within each of our VFO packages. To help you identify the best option for you here is a quick overview:

Growth VFO – This is the best option for ambitious business owners who are on a growth strategy to build and scale their business. Here we work closely with you in all aspects of the business' financial systems and processes, building financial projections, helping you to achieve your growth targets and providing regular management reporting from which you can make better decisions.

Reliance VFO – This is the best option for business owners who may have some financial staff in house or are in consolidation phase but require some management and input to streamline systems, provide regular management reporting and be on hand to guide you on all financial matters.

Comfort VFO – This option is for those business owners who are comfortable with managing their financial function by and large and on a budget but require some oversight to provide comfort.



Your options in detail


	Growth Accelerator	Conscious Growth	Foundation Focus
The essential things you need to be compliant	●	●	●
Review and streamlining of existing finance function systems & processes	●	●	●
Document capture system and process	●	●	●
Accounts receivable systems review and management	●	●	●
Overview and support to your internal finance staff	●	●	●
Accounts payable review and management	●	●	●
Bank feeds system set up for timely reconciliations	●	●	●
Unlimited email and telephone support Cost control: Expense monitoring, analysis and advice	●	●	○
Financial projections and custom reports to aid decision making Working capital / Cash flow management and monitoring	●	●	○
Financial risk management	●	●	○
Review of industry specific apps and implementation	●	○	○
Dashboard to track relevant financial and non-financial KPI's	●	○	○
Dedicated financial director contact	●	○	○

Your options in detail

	Growth VFO	Reliance VFO	Comfort VFO
Strategic planning to set goals and monitoring	●	○	○
Monthly accountability programme and support	●	○	○
Raising finance and investor reporting	●	○	○
Exit strategy development and formulation	●	○	○
Non-exec FD role assumed for third party credibility	●	○	○
Monthly payment of our fees making it easier for you to budget	●	●	●

Note: the price of this service is fully deductible for tax purposes, which means that HMRC will refund you a portion of this cost subject to the rate of corporation tax you pay. Also note that there is no employer's national insurance as there would be for an employed FD (saving 13.8%)

Also there is no minimum contract. If you are not getting value from the service, you can stop it at any time giving you complete control and flexibility.



Your options in detail – how you benefit

For a small fixed monthly investment, you can benefit from the following depending on the package and options chosen

Review and streamline existing finance function systems & processes

We will perform a health check on your existing finance function systems and processes to see where any inefficiencies exist and provide recommendations on improvements to save time and money.

Document capture system and process

We will review how documents flow through your current finance processes in order to streamline as much as possible so you only keep what you need and use technology to scan documents to save time on manual data entry – and reduce human errors that can result in financial loss. You will also be surprised how much space you can get back in your office when you go paperless!

Accounts receivable review and management

Many businesses suffer from cash flow due to poor invoicing and cash collection procedures. We will perform a review of your credit control procedures and help you implement strategies to get cash into your account faster. This might be through automating credit control, implementing direct debit or helping you to get payment up front using payment processing services like Stripe or Paypal.

Overview and support to your internal finance staff

It's hard to manage staff – let alone staff that are engaged in an activity that is not your forte. We will provide support to your in-house finance team for any queries they may have so they don't get frustrated and can be as productive and efficient as possible.

Accounts payable review and management

We can manage your payments function or review your existing processes and set up and provide advice on generating efficiencies, improving controls and saving you time and money. If you pay employee expenses then we can establish and implement systems for you to keep track of expense claims, ensure the relevant authorisations are in place and create a seamless process for claims.

Bank feeds system set up and timely reconciliations

We can undertake the bank and credit card reconciliations for you or if you are doing this in house then we can provide processes to undertake it as efficiently as possible across all bank and card accounts. Reconciliations are essential to ensuring that the financial data in your accounting system is accurate so that you know at any point in time who owes you what and what you owe to others.

Full management reporting

Creating real time management reports as to how the business is doing is crucial in helping you to make better business decisions. We will ensure that your finance function is set up to give you the reporting you need as regular as you need it so you always have a pulse on how your business is performing. More importantly we will accompany the reports with our commentary and analysis to help you make sense of the numbers.

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You can call upon your dedicated finance director contact at any time by email or phone without extra charge or worrying about the cost.

Dedicated financial director contact

You will have direct access to an experienced financial director that you can contact at any time who will work closely with you. It will just be like having an FD on your team. This means you have one point of contact for all your queries. They will be supported by other members of our team so you will always be able to get through to someone and receive a prompt reply.

Unlimited email and telephone support

You can call upon your dedicated client manager contact at any time by email or phone without extra charge or worrying about the cost. If there is anything that is required outside the agreed scope of services with you, we would always notify you in advance and provide a quote prior to proceeding. You will never receive a surprise bill from us.

Cost control: Expense monitoring, analysis and advice

It's very easy to lose control of costs when you are trying to grow a business. As you hire more people you will have employees that will be making expense claims. It is important to keep a handle on costs and have processes in place that keep costs in check whilst alerting you to any anomalies to manage your risk.

Financial projections and custom reports to aid decision making

You want to add a new hire to your team or invest in a product / service to help you take your business to the next level. However, can you afford to do so? What impact will it have on your financials? Are you taking into account all associated costs? We can help build projections to model the impact of incurring costs or investment and taking into account the time before the investment starts to bear fruit. Giving you different scenarios based on 'what-if' questions will greatly aid your decision making and manage risk. We will custom reports from your financials in other areas to help you make better business decisions.



Working capital / Cash flow management and monitoring

Cash is vital to the survival of any business. Monitoring cash flow is crucial in ensuring that you are to sustain the business during periods where trade may be down or where you need to invest to grow. Too often, future liabilities such as PAYE, VAT and corporation tax are forgotten when trying to manage cash just be looking at the bank balance. We will help you build, monitor and update your cash flow forecast so it becomes a real live forecast that gives you clear visibility over future cash balance and requirements.

Review of industry specific apps and implementation

There are over 1000 apps in the cloud accounting eco-system! And growing. We will research and make recommendations on apps that can integrate into your cloud accounting software that can generate efficiencies for you and therefore save time and money. Some of these may be industry specific to your sector and others more generally around business processes like project costing for example.

Financial risk management

Managing risk is critical to ensuring business survival. We will identify the key financial risks in your business and assist you in mitigating that risk so you don't lose money. For example, if you are onboarding a new customer and concerned about their ability to pay, we can run a credit check for you on your behalf.

Dashboard to track relevant financial and non-financial KPI's

Looking at data in management reports is helpful. However combining that with key performance indicators that are specific to helping you achieve the growth targets of your company is even more useful. Our motto is 'anything that is watched and measured, improves'. Having a dashboard with your financial and non-financial KPI's in one place and tracking them will help you and your team achieve your goals.

Strategic planning to set goals and monitoring

We will have a strategic planning session with you to understand your short, medium and long term goals and work with you to implement a series of targets to help you work towards achieving them.

Monthly accountability programme and support

One of the keys to success is taking action. You need to do the things necessary to move you towards your goals. Unfortunately this is harder than it sounds. The day to day running of a business often gets in the way.

Having an external personal holding you accountable helps you to get the right things done. We will schedule a monthly video call or meeting with you to help you work through your strategic action plan and provide help and support. This external support will make it much more likely you achieve your personal and business goals.

“YOUR CUSTOMER DOES NOT CARE HOW MUCH YOU KNOW UNTIL THEY KNOW HOW MUCH YOU CARE”

Raising finance and investor reporting

Depending on your growth plans you may need to raise finance or restructure existing finance. We will make representations on your behalf to our wide network of financiers to help you get the finance you need to sustain and grow your business.

Any financier will need management reports to ensure their investment is safeguarded. We will work with you to ensure that these are provided as required to maintain your credibility and credit line.

Exit strategy development and formulation

If you are looking to scale your business and targeting an exit strategy, you need a plan to ensure you get maximum value for the time, money and energy you have put in to building your business. We will work with you to develop an exit strategy that maximises value. This could include looking at options such as MBO's and looking at tying in key employees via tax efficient employee share option schemes.

Non-exec FD role assumed for third party credibility

If you are accountable to other shareholders or investors or have taken on risk finance, you may be required to have a non exec FD on board. We can perform that role for no extra cost within this package to give you the credibility required and comfort to your financiers.employee share option schemes.

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About The Conscious Accountant

At The Conscious Accountant we do what you would expect most accountants to do in terms of taking care of your accounts and taxes.

However, we go a step further by taking time to understand your problems and frustrations and help you on your journey to realise your business and personal goals. From filling the gaps in any part of your finance function to providing you with Virtual FD services, we can tailor a solution to your needs. On the tax front we have you covered. We approach tax planning holistically taking into account both your company and personal circumstances to reduce your overall tax burden.

Who we work with:



Collaboration

We work with business owners who value our input, wanting help to achieve business and personal objectives.



Entrepreneurship

You're a business owner who looks ahead, and needs regular support in all areas of finance.



Tech

You're ready to use whatever technology gives you access to the information you need, so you keep making great decisions.



Relationship

It's not merely year end accounts you need: you want your full finance function managed from bookkeeper to CFO.



Helping you pay less tax, make more money and free up more time



 **Hetty Verney Associates Ltd**

4 The Leaze
Somerford Keynes
Cirencester
GL7 6DP

 07741 050234

 Hetty@hvassociates.co.uk

www.hvassociates.co.uk

