

Better value from your employee benefits expenditure



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Civica is a market leader in software and services that help organisations to improve service delivery and efficiency. It has specialist expertise in local government, social housing, enforcement and education. Blending consulting, software and managed services, the group supplies more than 1,800 customers in the UK, Australia, Asia Pacific and the USA, including 90% of the UK's local authorities, more than 200 social housing organisations and 50 of the UK's 53 police forces. Its products and services are behind local transactions with more than 25 million citizens and businesses.

The company has 12 offices in the UK with around 800 employees. After a period of prolonged growth and the acquisition of a number of smaller businesses - resulting in 14 different pension schemes - its employee benefits infrastructure had become difficult to manage and employee awareness was not optimised.

After Civica had met with various advisers, Alexander Forbes Financial Services (AFFS) were chosen to provide a solution. From March 2008 AFFS helped Civica consolidate the schemes and implement XtraPay, a flexible benefits package with an online total reward statement, that aims to improve the value of the company's benefit spend by increasing employee awareness and understanding of the benefits they receive.

The online total reward statement allows members to take control of their own administration details, reducing the time spent on pensions administration for the company and shows the employees the total cash value of the benefits they are receiving.

AFFS took full control of the member communication and met with individuals across the country to explain the changes. The entire process took less than five months.



Civica's Human Resources Director, Wendy Merry, spoke to Alexander Forbes about the experience and XtraPay.



"XtraPay instantly appealed because it meant our employees could go online to check the value of their package.."

Why did Civica decide to review its employee benefits?

Civica is an 'acquiring business'. Over the last few years we've acquired several businesses and with them came their benefits, brokers and providers. Some of the businesses had also acquired businesses too making the situation even more complicated. This meant we had 14 different schemes and administering these schemes had become onerous and time consuming.

Why did you choose to work with Alexander Forbes?

We met with a number of companies before choosing Alexander Forbes. We were looking for a company who could help us to achieve consistency and coherence but we didn't realise, until we met Alexander Forbes, that we also needed a partnership with a company who could help us to become more proactive in our approach to benefits.

What did they suggest?

Alexander Forbes suggested that XtraPay would be an ideal way to harmonise, consolidate and promote our benefits schemes. It instantly appealed because it meant our employees could go online to check the value of their package. It also allows employees to change certain details themselves thus reducing the amount of admin on the HR team. Our benefits are good but the level of awareness and understanding among our staff at that time was low. So the total reward statement was ideal. With XtraPay we were also able to implement the affinity benefits (including 24 hour employee assistance helpline and membership of The Money Club).

Was everything explained clearly to you?

AFFS explained clearly and simply without ever being laborious. It was actually interesting! Any problems were resolved immediately so we could move on.

Can you tell us about the benefits themselves?

We provide our employees with medical cover, life cover, pension (matched contributions up to 5%) and private health insurance. The affinity benefits that come with XtraPay have now been added (Childcare vouchers, tax-free bikes, membership of the Money Club and the helpline services). Similar benefits were provided before, however they were at an additional cost to the business. XtraPay saved us around £28,000 here.





“The reporting is excellent. The business now has a much better understanding of what we are spending.”

How was the transition communicated to members?

Alexander Forbes’ team delivered presentations to our staff across the country, on and off site. They held one to ones and they even visited people on maternity leave. They have been very flexible and very supportive.

What was the response from your staff?

I’m not afraid to say that I went into this with a certain amount of trepidation as I know benefits and in particular pensions can be quite emotive subjects, particularly when you are changing suppliers. Although there was some initial resistance, once Alexander Forbes met with individuals, these people became the biggest advocates! I’ve received a lot of positive feedback from across the business. People appreciate an employer who provides the opportunity for them to discuss their finances and receive advice in normal working hours. A lot of people have benefited.

What about the level of staff awareness?

It has raised awareness by at least 50%. Most people had a certain amount of understanding about their benefits but not many fully understood the whole package available to them. I have a significant number of people signing up for childcare vouchers and Bikes for work. I noticed the other day, that even the directors of the business are using these benefits.

Are there any other benefits to XtraPay?

The reporting is excellent and an added bonus, giving the business a much better understanding of what we are spending. It's extremely easy to use. What I am particularly impressed with is the flexibility of the software.

We worked with Alexander Forbes to slightly adapt XtraPay to use as our HR platform so that we don't have two systems running together, we are hopeful this will save us money too.

Many employers think that employee benefits is too sensitive to tamper with, what would you say?

Just go to Alexander Forbes! They helped me to overcome the complicated issues. In many cases they accepted responsibility for things on my behalf and dealt directly with the other brokers, employees etc. After a couple of weeks working with Alexander Forbes, all my concerns about the change programme disappeared as my implementation consultant was absolutely fantastic.

What does the future hold for Civica's employee benefits?

We now have the infrastructure to develop a flexible reward strategy should we choose to go down this route.

Would you recommend Alexander Forbes to another business?

Absolutely 110%. They have done a fabulous job. The people are excellent and the level of customer service is extremely high.





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