



# HSS Hire Service Group



## Company Description

HSS was the originator of hire shops in 1957. Within a decade it had gained a wide reputation for being the leading supplier of a vast range of equipment on hire. Today, it is still the undoubted leader in the field with an extensive nation-wide network, a bigger range of products than ever before and customer service priority. HSS Hire Shops aims to lead by excellence.

## Product

ResourceLink

## Challenge

The objective was to introduce a truly integrated human resources system that would provide HSS with single data entry for both payroll and personnel systems, generate a wide range of reports and support 'self-service' human resources.

## Solution

The implementation of ResourceLink, which provided HSS with an easy to use integrated system with all of the above functions required, in addition to a point-and-click approach to building management reports.

*"The system is much quicker and has a range of useful time-saving features such as being able to look up a record if you only have part of a name or are not quite sure how to spell it."*

*Personnel Director  
HSS Hire Service Group*

## Benefits

The input of data is simple and quick and the administration tasks are executed efficiently and speedily with automated processes in place to reduce requirement for human intervention and possible error. This is saving significant time for HR personnel along with staff who can access their individual records and play an active part in the human resources process. The result is that the HR department is required to spend less time on administrative tasks, freeing up more time to dedicate to strategic responsibilities.

## Background

When HSS Hire Service Group, which runs businesses in tool, equipment and plant hire, decided to switch to a new personnel and payroll system, personnel director Mike Vernon suspected it would not be easy, but hoped the benefits would be worth it. It had been 12 years since the company had first started using its existing systems and it was plainly time for a change.

"We had separate payroll and personnel systems that were reliable and robust, but they weren't user friendly and it was difficult to write reports," says Vernon. "Neither system was Windows-based and I felt we needed to take full advantage of new technology and update."

It wasn't only technology that had moved on. In the past 12 years, running both payroll and personnel had become a much more complex management task as well. In the last few years, payroll managers have had to cope with new rules such as Statutory Sick Pay, Working Families Tax Credit, the National Minimum Wage and collection of student loans.

Personnel managers, too, have had to raise their game, particularly in terms of recording information about issues such as training, health and safety as well as complying with more complex rules on matters like employee rights and discrimination.

It all means that neither payroll nor personnel professionals want the distraction of worrying about maintaining old systems. And like backoffice functions in most businesses, they are also under constant pressure to keep costs down.

Vernon's department manages personnel and payroll for HSS's 2,500 employees in the UK and Ireland with a staff of just 14 people. He also has a dotted-line report for the company's US operations, which has its own payroll and personnel function. HSS runs a wide range of hire businesses including 400 tool and equipment hire shops around the country, and managing personnel for a dispersed workforce is generally more complex than when everybody is concentrated on one or two sites. Besides, as a high proportion of the staff is working in retail, payroll is complicated with shift patterns and other payments such as temporary contracts.

## HSS Core Objectives

### Single-data entry

In his search for a new system, Vernon started with a strong plus. He had a clear idea of what he was looking for from the new software.

"It was absolutely vital we got single data entry for both payroll and personnel systems," he recalls. "Because our old systems weren't linked, that meant we had to enter every employee record twice. When you add up the fields in every record and multiply that by 2,500 employees, you can see the capacity for error."

Inevitably, disparities in employee records caused confusion for payroll and personnel staff and sometimes annoyed employees. The errors wasted time and effort to sort out.

### Improved information access and reporting

Next on Vernon's wish-list was an easy-to-use system. Part of that came down to a friendly Windows-like user interface with a familiar look and feel. But there was more to it than that.

The old system was often cumbersome to use, involving drilling down through successive layers before finding information. Vernon wanted a system where it was easier to get to the field of information in a record.

He also wanted the ability to generate a wider range of reports with less effort. His department was managing with the old system by developing report writing patches, but when managers know it is difficult to get management information, they tend to ask for less of it. Vernon wanted managers to be able to have ready access to the information they needed without that concern.

### Self-Service human resources

Finally, he wanted the new system to support "self-service" human resources. This is, arguably, the biggest shift in the last 10 years in the way HR services are delivered. The idea is that an employee should be able to access his or her own record (often using a PIN number security procedure to protect unauthorised entry) to obtain or even change some fields of information.

This shift recognises that much of the work of personnel departments has historically been concerned with record keeping. And not just basic data about names and addresses, but a growing menu of information such as skills, languages, training and career progression. Moreover, this transactional work is what management gurus now call "nonvalue adding".

What personnel professionals increasingly want is to add value to the business by using - rather than merely updating - the information that is collected to help other managers run the business more effectively. Self-Service offers the promise of setting the personnel department free of much of the routine record keeping work.

Initially, Vernon is setting up the system so that employees can view their own records rather than change or add information to them. But his department already spends a significant amount of time answering employee queries so that this, in itself has already been an enormous benefit.

Eventually, local managers will be able to update records for their own employees, which will lighten the load in the personnel department.

## Solution

Taking all his considerations into account, Vernon opted for NorthgateArinso's ResourceLink Personnel and Payroll system, which could fulfil all his key objectives and tackle what would be a significant project. This included making the transition from the old system to ResourceLink as seamless as possible.

The implementation phase began with all of the 2,500 employee records on both the old payroll and personnel systems being checked for accuracy before being transferred to the new one. This meant checking 5,000 records with original data and reconciling differences where they appeared in a pair of supposedly matching records about the same person.

Another critical job was building up an organisation chart of the company hierarchy and defining terms and conditions for all categories of job within it. Vernon says:

"This was a very cumbersome and time consuming task using the previous software. We'd just about got it right after 12 years, but the switch-over enabled us to make some changes to things we weren't particularly happy with."

All this was aided with ResourceLink's ability to present a graphical view of an organisation, so that the process of producing important reports was much easier and the information presented was as accurate as possible.

### Operational efficiency

A few months into the implementation, Vernon is extremely impressed with the system, already seeing considerable changes in the running of the department.

"The system is much quicker and has a range of useful time-saving features such as being able to look up a record if you only have part of a name or are not quite sure how to spell it."

With the system in place, Vernon is already seeing a difference in how the personnel department is operating, with less time being spent on administrative tasks, freeing his team's time to take on more strategic responsibilities. This will increase further as the company takes more advantage of the selfservice capability of ResourceLink.

### **Business Intelligence**

Personnel manager Jane Millard explains, "Single data input for both personnel and payroll is already saving us significant amounts of time and we have also created a number of standard tasks to generate letters and documents."

For example, one task that handles new employees, is able to produce the relevant contract letter, starter letter, starter card (which is passed to payroll) and information sheet used for references. With the old system, this simple function would have been performed as individual tasks in what was a lengthy process.

Within his role, Vernon particularly finds the point-and-click approach to building management reports, and using business intelligence tools, is making it much easier to create regular or ad hoc reports. He is convinced the effort of the switch to ResourceLink has been very worthwhile, with HSS now having a truly integrated personnel and payroll system which can support its growth. And the company which supplies tools and equipment to thousands of customers is, itself, tooled up in its own payroll and personnel departments to add value to the company.

## **For more information**

With the skills, experience and market knowledge of NorthgateArinso behind you, you too can be well placed to translate the HR challenges your organisation is facing into powerful opportunities.

For an initial discussion about your requirements call us on 0800 035 0545.  
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