Software Review



Dolio – MTD Bridging Software

Scope of Review

Making Tax Digital (MTD) created perhaps the largest shake up for businesses since the implementation of RTI and PAYE reporting. For myself, this change lead to a split of clients, those unaffected by the change who were already using suitable accounting software and those reluctant to change and using anything from inherited paper-based cashbooks to Excel spreadsheets.

The reluctance of clients to move to full accountancy software was mostly born from many feeling that they had been submitting VAT returns using a system that worked, so why should they have to change? Whilst bridging solutions exist to provide compliance, data is still retained in less favourable formats. Dolio however provides a middle ground in which those less technically inclined can make a small transition from spreadsheet to MTD solution, rather than being thrown in at the deep end with all the bells and whistles of a full accountancy software package, business owners can be guided, leaving paper-based records behind.

Company Background

Dolio is the second offering from Rison Software Limited. Rison was founded in January 2017 by entrepreneur Richard Chalk and focuses on providing intuitive and growth promoting solutions for businesses of all sizes. Rison currently offers its products in the UK, South Africa and the UAE with plans for expansion into the USA and Australasian markets.

Rison have developed Dolio, a cloud based MTD bridging software, as an easy to use, cost effective solution for both SMEs and larger enterprises. The main aim of the HMRC approved software is to provide a simple system in which businesses can raise invoices, record expenses and manage VAT in an MTD compliant way.

A standalone product in its own right, Dolio also boasts a powerful Xero integration, providing a vital gateway for the exchange of raw data whilst retaining the integrity of wider information usually reserved for use by advisors during the year end process. Along with the base product, Dolio Plus provides a free of charge platform for bookkeepers and accountants to view and enter data on behalf of Dolio clients and submit VAT returns each quarter.

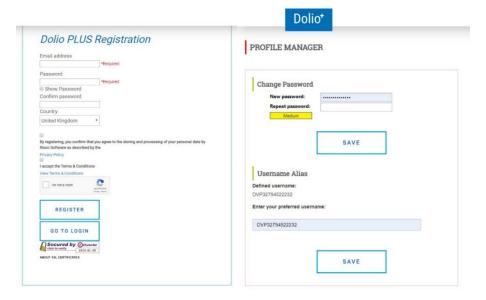
Product Overview

For this review I have used a demo company alongside fictional customer and supplier data, some of which has been obtained with permission from the Dolio/Dolio Plus User Guide, created by Rison Software Limited. The review focuses on key areas of both Dolio and Dolio Plus. At the time of the review, Dolio supports VAT claims and submissions under the Standard and Cash accounting schemes on a quarterly basis.

Sign Up Process and Pricing

Dolio for Small Businesses

Businesses can sign up to Dolio using their email address and a preferred password to receive a free 30-day trial after which subscriptions start at just £7.20 per month or £60 per annum (incl. VAT). The entry level package provides access for up to five users, although Dolio can cater for companies with 250 plus users.

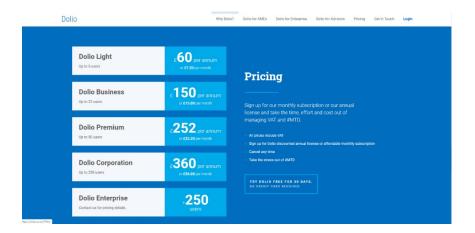


Dolio Plus for Bookkeepers and Accountants

Dolio also offer a free Dolio Plus account for Bookkeepers and Accountants. The sign-up process is the same for advisors as businesses, requiring only an email address and a preferred password. Becoming a Dolio Plus bookkeeping and accounting advisor allows you to offer client discounts of up to 5% and receive commission for each associated Dolio license held.

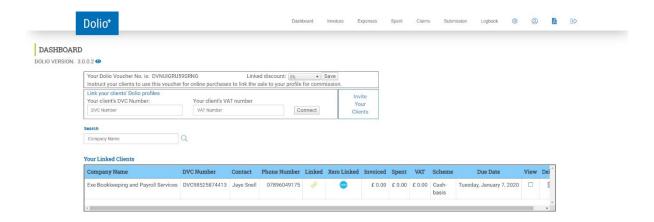
Subscriptions

The subscription page provides an overview of pricing and easy renewals process with licences available on a monthly or annual basis. Once registered, Dolio clients can also enter discount codes provided to them by their Dolio Plus advisor reducing the cost of ongoing subscriptions, a feature that is not available independently from the main Dolio sign up screen.



Dolio Plus Dashboard

The first stop after completing the sign-up process is the Dolio dashboard, a minimal workspace focused on client and data management where advisors can invite their clients to Dolio, request access to data and issue discount codes. Underneath is a search box and a 'linked clients' box providing company information, linked statuses and VAT related information associated with clients invoices, expenses, VAT schemes and return due dates.

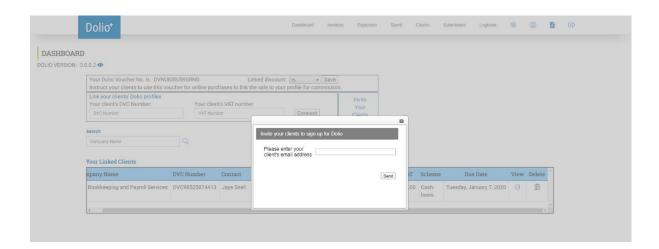


Above these boxes is a programme menu containing links to the Dashboard, client Invoices, Expenses, Spent lists, Claims, VAT Submissions and Logbook information along with icons for settings/registration details, a profile manager, PDF user guide and log out button.

Another dashboard feature I quite like is the release notes details, identified by the blue eye icon at the top of the screen. Clicking on this icon provides up to date details of the latest features, fixes and changes completed within the software, so no more product pages or additional emails.

Inviting a Client to Dolio

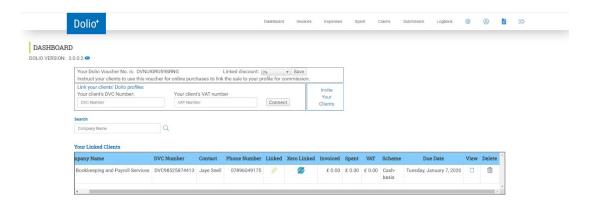
The process to sign up a client is fairly straightforward. Dolio advisors use the blue 'Invite Your Client' link on the Dolio Plus dashboard and provide a valid email address. This sends a notification to your client requesting they sign up to Dolio and once completed, your client will be issued with a DVC number. Whilst currently no link exists to sign up clients as a practice (on their behalf), contact can be made with Rison to facilitate this process which sees the billing issued to the practice only. This provides an opportunity to recharge clients a bespoke rate or provide the software as part of a wider package.



Linking to a Client Profile

After a client successfully signs up to Dolio, a link must be created between the advisor profile and client profile to provide open access to the client's data. The first step in linking a client's profile is to enter their new DVC Number in full, along with their VAT number, in the boxes provided at the top of the dashboard screen, finishing with the 'Connect' button.

Following this process, the client details will be shown in the 'Your Linked Clients' box and a request will be sent to the client via their Dolio profile and they will also be notified by email. Client's will need to log in to their Dolio profile to accept requests before you are able to view any of their data. Once accepted, successfully linked profiles are marked by a green link icon.



Viewing Client Data

Client data is accessed from the Dolio Plus dashboard using the tick box under the 'View' heading in the 'Your Linked Clients' section. Once ticked, the various menu headings can be used to access data that has been entered by the client or to make new entries in the software.



Linking to Xero

Dolio also has the added benefit of a Xero link. This extra link provides an easy to use data entry platform in Dolio, whilst maintaining the continuity and integrity of more sensitive data held in Xero, typically relating to year end computations.

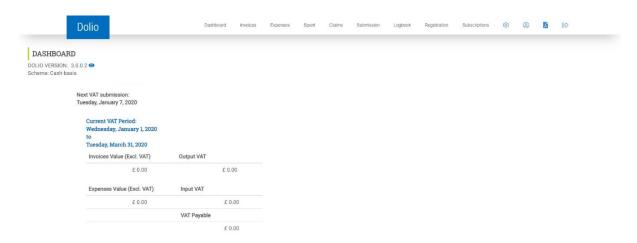


The link is easy to initiate through the 'Xero Linked' column of each client record held in the 'Your Linked Clients' list by clicking on the Xero logo and following the onscreen prompts. Once initiated, you will be taken through to the Xero authentication screen and asked to select the client data to link with Dolio.

Once the link is completed, data entered into Dolio can be synced with data held in Xero, providing up to date information on VAT liabilities for such purposes as management reporting using Xero reports. This function is only available to advisors and it should be noted that any information transferred from Xero records to Dolio cannot be amended within Dolio itself. Any records affected by this will have a Xero logo next to the entry within Dolio.

Dolio Dashboard for Clients

The Dolio dashboard for clients is presented in much the same platform as for advisors, albeit with a few additional menu options. Along with access to invoice and expense modules, clients can make changes to registration details, manage subscription information and update company settings relating to linked profiles and VAT registration.



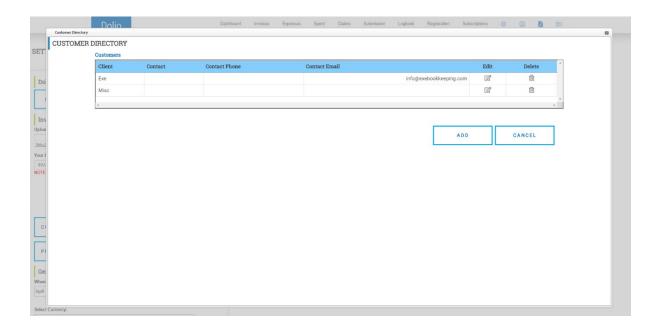
Management of Additional User Licences

As mentioned before, Dolio can provide a platform for employees to record out of pocket expenses. Additional users are added via the 'Registration' page with clients able to choose whether employees have full access to all areas of the software or more restricted access. Each additional user is provided with a DVU number which they use to access the 'Expense' module at all permission levels, to record their reclaimable expenses.

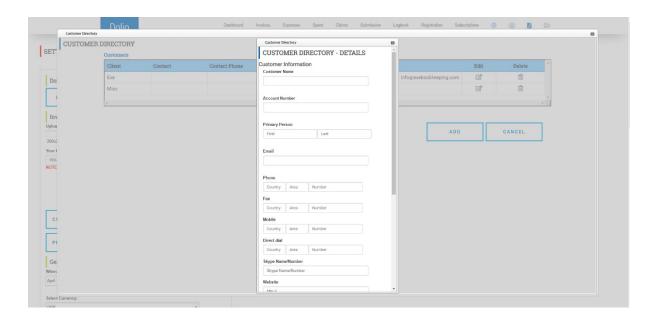


Contact Directory and Product Management

Customer, Supplier and Product information is held within the Dolio software settings where contact details can be reviewed, added, updated or removed. Clicking on the 'Customer Directory' box brings up a list of current customer contacts each with their own edit or delete button, likewise when selecting the Supplier Directory box.



Adding new customers or suppliers can be completed in their respective screens or during the invoice/expense entry process.



The same process is again repeated for product management, although the entry screen is somewhat reduced. New products can be added via this method or as part of the invoicing process. New products do require an item code, item name/description, unit price and a nominal account. Whilst it would have been preferable for the item name to be the factor by which invoicing is

completed, the product name can be included in the item code box making it easier to select the right product during the invoice creation process.

Joint Features of Dolio/Dolio Plus

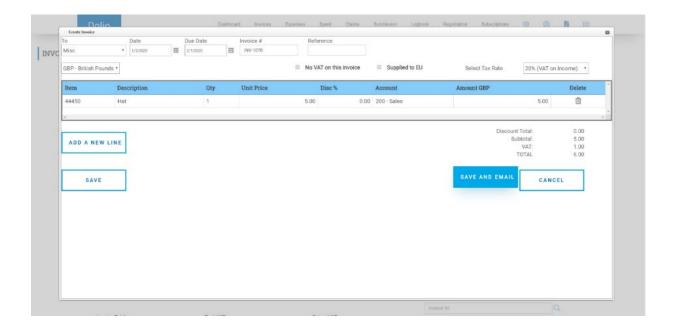
Creating Invoices

The invoice creation tool is accessed via the main dashboard menu under 'Invoices'. Unmistakably, highlighted in blue the 'create invoice button' leads to a new screen with simple headings and a clear workflow.

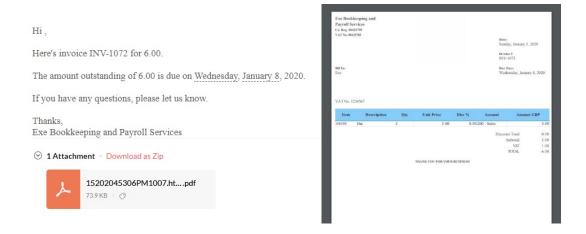
Customer details can be selected using the dropdown menu or new customers can be created in screen, followed by the invoice date, due date and reference, great for PO numbers or other relevant information, the invoice number is prepopulated and sequential but can be overwritten.

Moving down to the next row, GBP is automatically selected and at present there are no further currency options. Tick boxes are provided for invoices with no VAT and also supplies to the EU, along with tax rate selection.

Next is line items, again an unmistakable blue box marked 'Add a New Line' opens the product management screen. Existing stock items created in the product management screen can be used in the invoice or new ones can be added, providing scope to enter an item code, description, unit price, pack quantity, discount and nominal code (Dolio follows the Xero Chart of Accounts as standard).



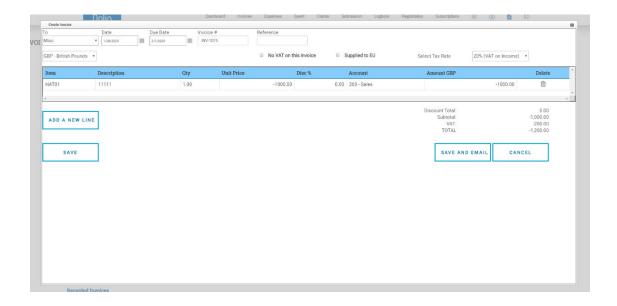
Once all required information is added to the invoice this can be saved or saved and emailed. The email is friendly and professional with the invoice attached via an embedded pdf. The invoice design is basic but meets all the necessary requirements for a valid VAT invoice. A company logo can be added for some personalisation.



All invoices raised within Dolio are listed at the bottom of the invoice screen. An overview provides date and invoice totals along with payment status. The evidence column icons, when selected, produce a copy of the relevant invoice which can easily be edited or deleted if required. It should be noted that the edit button also acts as a payment button, bringing selected invoices up on to the screen above where the status can be amended, and the date of payment entered in the 'paid date' box.



Credit notes can be added via the invoice screen using negative figures for the value in place of positive figures.

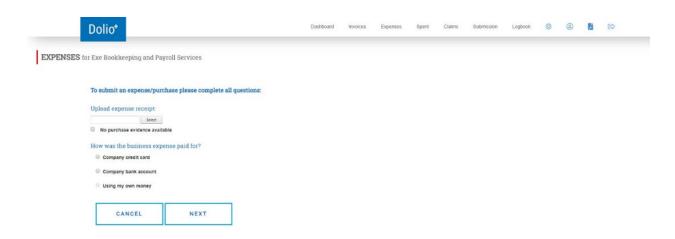


Entering Expenses and Spent List

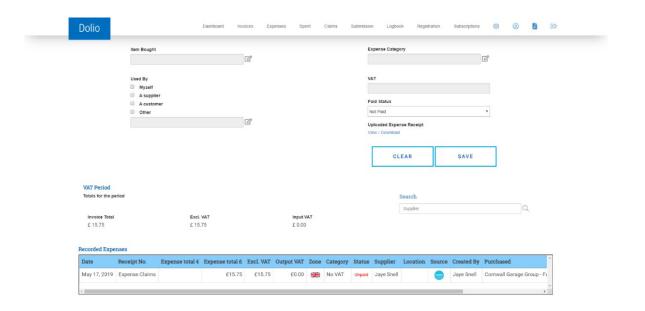
The process of entering expenses into Dolio is a little different to other bookkeeping software. The initial screen is again, simple and minimalistic with an area to upload purchase evidence such as receipts.

The system asks for details relating to how the expense was paid for; credit card, bank account or own money, the latter option leading the way for personal expense claims. Further information is required including the date the purchase was made, who it was bought from, being given the option to select a prior supplier or add new, followed by the reference or invoice number for the expense.

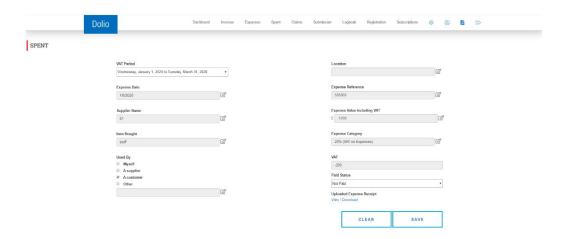
Pressing next again leads on to information regarding currency, with provision for GBP or Euros, along with the tax rate for the expense. Moving to the final page, location details (an optional entry aimed at PSA's), a description of the purchase and details of who the purchase was bought for, can be entered. A final 'next', and the screen generates the expense, moving the entry to the 'Spent' list.



The spent list provides details of all entries made in Dolio as well as providing a platform to edit and view attached purchase evidence such as receipts and invoices. Expenses can also be marked as paid in much the same way as invoices, through the use of the edit button found at the end of each expense entry in the 'recorded expenses' section at the bottom of the page.

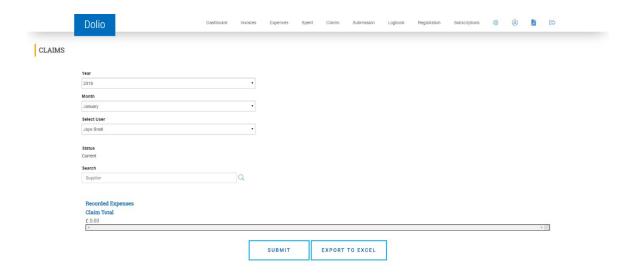


Supplier credit notes can be added through the expense module using the same process, again entering negative value figures in place of positive figures.



Claims

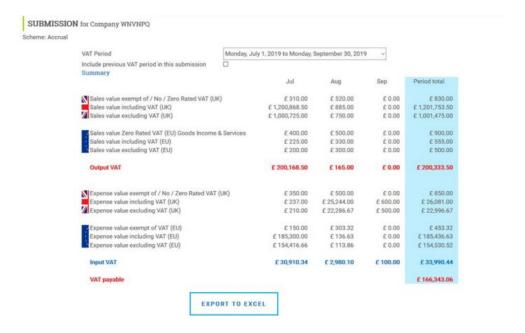
PAYE settlement agreement claims are generated using the expense module, selecting the 'used my own money option'. As expenses build up over a specified period, employees can use the 'Claim' module to submit their expense data and supporting documentation to line managers using the integrated email button or if preferred, export to excel. Managers are able to review and approve Dolio submitted expense claims ready for reimbursement via payroll.



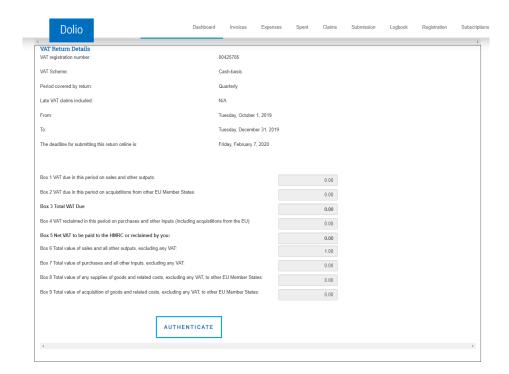
Submissions and Logbook

Turning to the VAT return, the 'Submission' page is where all the information entered into Dolio is collated into an MTD approved format.

The submission page itself is split between a summary for the period and a nine box VAT return. The summary provides a breakdown by month of VAT for both UK and EU Sales Output and Purchases Input VAT alongside total VAT payable. This information can be easily exported to Excel if required.



The submission process is much the same as any other accounting/MTD bridging software, with the blue 'Authenticate' button taking you through to the HMRC website to confirm authority for the software to interact with HMRC by entering the correct Government Gateway credentials.



Once authentication is complete, the return can be submitted to HMRC, with all submissions viewable on the 'Logbook' page.



Software Support

The team behind Dolio have been very quick to respond via telephone and email, to any queries I have had. Within both Dolio and Dolio Plus they also provide an easy to understand product guide to assist with the use of the software. They appear keen to have an open relationship with their users and receive feedback, both good and bad, in order to develop the product further.

Strengths

- An easy to use interface, simple data entry processes and a logic driven layout make for a really refreshing system that does exactly what is says on the tin.
- Dolio is great value for money, equating to just £1 per user per month (annual, 5 user packages, Jan 2020)
- The Xero integration is a final finishing touch to a set-up which has the potential to provide greater protection of source information through its separation of data entry processes and accounting system set up, alongside wider opportunities for higher level reporting and year end processing.

Weaknesses

- The Dolio sign-up process could be improved for greater control over the invitation of clients, software discounts and company settings. Whilst Rison have said that bulk clients can be added on behalf of its partners who would then be billed for licenses, the requirement to do this manually seems far removed from the automation I am used to with other software systems. The sign-up process does however work in its current form and it's easy to request access and provide discounts to clients from within the Dolio Plus dashboard.
- There's a lack of automation within Dolio and even though ability exists to upload and attach
 receipts and invoices to entries manually, a great app solution would be very helpful. Fingers
 crossed this is a short-term issue as Rison have advised they are currently working on a data
 extraction tool.

Summary

Dolio as an MTD solution reduces the room for error and the tedious import/export processes experienced when using more traditional bridging systems supported by the larger players of the MTD scene. It's an easy to use software package ideal for small businesses, start-up companies and the tech adverse who need a simplified record keeping system inclusive of the basic features to comply with the digitisation of VAT record keeping, without the headache of multiple menus and a hefty price tag.

Yes, it does have less automation than some other software systems, but this could also be seen as a blessing in disguise especially considering the software's target market for whom extra processes may cause difficulties. Rison also deserve points for listening to their customers and being keen to develop a product that's beneficial to its users and not full of unnecessary features and unhelpful processes.

The addition of employee out of pocket expenses record keeping makes Dolio much more than it's labelled 'bridging' solution and whilst not being a fully-fledged accounting system, it is a solid software option to encourage more clients to turn away from paper based systems and error prone spreadsheets as a result of its low price point and Xero integration for advisors.

Overall Dolio is an aesthetically pleasing, easy to use software that presents with clean, uncluttered data screens. Its layout leads to an intuitive workflow process that guides users, increasing confidence and providing a transparent overview of a business's VAT position at any time.