# ATT welcome, January 2019

Welcomes

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## Timeo Danaos

It’s 2019! Happy New Year! I hope you had a good break and got quite a few welcome gifts over the festive season. A New Year is always cause for celebration and I thought I would start it by looking forward to what ‘gifts’ we should expect as practitioners in the coming year.

As I collated my list, I came to the realisation that this year, more than in recent years, has the potential to be one of immense challenge for the profession. This is because we have been promised quite a few ‘gifts’ in advance and, all things being equal, should be receiving them during the course of this year. Despite already having been told what to expect, there is however, quite worryingly, still an element of surprise in all of them.

31 January is no longer a surprise. Whether anyone can suggest it is a gift might be stretching the imagination a bit; but the fact that it signals the end of the Tax Return season is a cause for celebration for those like me who are heavily involved in the process. I do not expect it to be any different this year. Despite advances constantly being made in the technological field, and improvements in regulatory compliance, each innovative development seems to create its own new areas of concern. GDPR means certain clients are being dragged, kicking and screaming, into the new world as they become familiar with the additional security measures required by the regulations. In certain cases, the completion of the tax return is taking longer as clients slowly come to grips with using secure portals with confidence, or simply forget the passwords they have placed on documents that they have sent digitally! If you are involved in the self-assessment process, I wish you all the best with those last-minute filers.

A number of you will have registered for the MTD for VAT pilot and it would be interesting to know how you are getting on with this. Please let us (well our super-efficient technical team at atttechnical@att.org.uk) know the good, bad and the ugly sooner rather than later, so that any issues can be fed back before it goes live. There has been a tendency to concentrate on the start date of 1 April 2019, from when all VAT-registered businesses with a taxable turnover above the VAT threshold are required to keep digital records and send VAT returns digitally to HMRC using MTD-compatible software. Please do not forget that, even though the start date for some VAT registered businesses was deferred, they will also be required to join with effect from 1 October 2019.

In the middle of this all, we have Brexit on 31 March. Or do we? It is unfortunate the level of uncertainty that still exists for such a monumental change; but regular readers of this column will hopefully have got their clients as prepared as they can be in the circumstances, deal or no deal. Our Brexit webpages are still a good source of information.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the 2019 loan charge. This was on a slow burner for quite a while and suddenly seemed to get a life late last year, culminating with the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee commenting on it in their paper on ‘The Powers of HMRC: Treating Taxpayers fairly’. No one put it better than the CIOT President Ray McCann in his report to the Treasury sub-committee. If you have any clients affected by this, please do not put your head in the sand.

A very late arriving gift is in relation to residential property owners. From 6 April 2020 they will have to think carefully about the timing of any sale or gift of their property. From that date, UK resident owners of UK residential property who realise a gain on disposal that is subject to tax, will need to report the gain and make a payment on account of the tax due within 30 days of the completion of the transaction. There is some unfairness in how the proposals will work which our technical officers have commented on on the ATT website.

I am at a loss to understand what we have done as a profession to be deserving of such gifts?

All is not doom and gloom though. Our conferences were very well attended last year and feedback from them has been really good. We hope to continue these in 2019. The number of candidates sitting our Foundation qualifications continues to

grow, as do the numbers taking the main examinations. The membership of ATT recently exceeded the 9,000 mark and this year, our President, Tracy Easman will be leading us in celebrating 30 years of excellence. Watch this space.

I have managed to get to the end of an article without writing about penalties! Someone somewhere owes me a drink. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible during the year. You can also email me at page@att.org.uk. Meanwhile, I wish each and every one of you a very Happy New Year and all the very best in 2019.