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UK compliance checklist for scaling manufacturers

A practical readiness checklist for UK manufacturers and hardware businesses scaling in their home market — UKCA and product conformity, engagement structure and IR35, VAT and tax, customs and supply chain, and the legal and data obligations that underpin them. Compiled by Dr Gareth Mills, fractional COO.

1. Product conformity and market access

- [ ] Identify every GB regulation that applies (Electrical Equipment, EMC, Radio Equipment, Machinery, PPE, Toys, Construction Products) and map CE-only products to their UKCA route.
- [ ] Confirm the conformity assessment route per product — self-declaration or UK Approved Body — and hold certificates where required.
- [ ] Compile and maintain the technical file: design and test evidence, risk assessment, designated standards applied, and bill of materials.
- [ ] Issue a signed UK Declaration of Conformity per product, and keep EU DoCs current where the same product is sold into the EU or Northern Ireland.
- [ ] Apply UKCA, CE and UKNI marking correctly on product, packaging and documentation, with Approved Body numbers where applicable.
- [ ] Hold RoHS and REACH (GB and EU) substance declarations from every supplier, refreshed on a defined cycle.
- [ ] Meet GPSR traceability duties for any product sold into the EU or Northern Ireland: manufacturer and responsible person details and batch identification.

2. Business structure and contracts

- [ ] Confirm the right engagement structure — limited company, umbrella or direct employment — and that contracts match the working reality.
- [ ] Assess IR35 / off-payroll status: written status determination statements, and day-to-day working practices that match the determination.
- [ ] Put confidentiality, IP assignment and restrictive covenant terms in every consultancy and employment contract.
- [ ] Confirm professional indemnity and public liability insurance limits against client contract requirements.
- [ ] Hold Companies House filings, confirmation statements and PSC register current, with statutory books maintained.

3. Tax, VAT and finance

- [ ] Register for VAT at the £90,000 threshold (or voluntarily), choose the right scheme, and file MTD-compliant returns.
- [ ] Confirm corporation tax registration, payment timelines and capital allowances on plant and R&D.
- [ ] Assess R&D tax relief claims under the merged scheme, with qualifying project and cost records kept contemporaneously.
- [ ] Check apprenticeship levy, payroll and auto-enrolment pension duties as headcount grows.
- [ ] Model landed cost and duty exposure on imported materials into product margin, and claim inward processing relief where useful.

4. Customs, origin and supply chain

- [ ] Hold a GB EORI number and register for CDS; add an EU EORI where you clear goods into the EU.
- [ ] Classify every product to the correct commodity code and validate against binding tariff information.
- [ ] Evidence preferential origin under the UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement with supplier declarations on file.
- [ ] Confirm Incoterms in every customer and supplier contract, matching who actually clears the goods.
- [ ] Set up customs brokerage, duty deferment and, where useful, customs warehousing or inward processing.
- [ ] Build supply chain continuity plans: dual sourcing, buffer stock and supplier agreements with clear lead time and quality terms.

5. Legal, data and employment

- [ ] UK GDPR: lawful basis, records of processing, DPAs with processors, and ICO registration where required.
- [ ] Confirm international data transfer mechanisms (UK adequacy, IDTA or addendum to EU SCCs) for data leaving the UK.
- [ ] Meet employment basics: written statements of terms, right-to-work checks, health and safety policy, and statutory leave administration.
- [ ] Confirm product liability cover and a documented recall / corrective action process.
- [ ] Register trade marks and designs with the UK IPO; confirm freedom to operate in your product category.
- [ ] Meet WEEE, packaging (pEPR) and batteries producer responsibility obligations where you place those products on the GB market.