

Case study

Betfair rejects SAP, Oracle and Workday in favor of Sage Business Cloud People for HR

London-based betting exchange Betfair has replaced its ageing SAP HR system with Sage Business Cloud People HRMS, which it has implemented in preference to alternatives from Oracle and Workday.

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Challenge

Simon MacDonald, Head of Talent Acquisition and HR Systems at Betfair, told Computing that he was originally given the task of examining the company's existing HR system to see how it could be improved.

"We had gone through a lot of changes in our business and we wanted to ensure that our HR function was supporting the business in the best way we can, so our HR director was keen to review what we had in order to see whether we could improve or potentially change it."

Simon MacDonald

Head of Talent Acquisition and HR Systems, Betfair

The SAP system had only been in place for about five years, but MacDonald said that it was a "very large-scale enterprise-level system that wasn't fit for purpose".

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"We are 14 years old, we've got 1,700 employees across about 15 countries, we don't have 20,000 or 50,000 employees so the old system didn't fit us as a business," he claimed.

But there were other issues with the SAP product. According to MacDonald, it was hard to make changes to the system and adapt it to how Betfair wanted it. "It took time, and was complex and costly to make changes, which didn't fit in with our ethos of being fast-paced and agile," he said.

The company also had to rely on a systems integrator, which had supported and hosted the SAP solution, for Betfair to make any changes.

Furthermore, Betfair was also not able to roll out the system globally to all of its locations, said MacDonald because "there were certain challenges stopping us from doing so".

The system also wasn't integrated to the company's other HR systems, such as its APS system, and therefore there was a lot of manual intervention needed in order to operate it.

Beauty contest

When Betfair finally looked at other options, MacDonald suggested that it became clear that the organization could install a better system, that would be much cheaper to run.

In total 11 vendors were evaluated, these included a cloud HR solution from Workday, as well as Oracle, but MacDonald felt that these were also "too big for what Betfair needed".

This became more apparent when the company looked at offerings from smaller organizations, such as Sage Business Cloud People, TribeHR, SumTotal Systems and Aragon-eRH.

"We picked Sage Business Cloud People because it was a good fit for our organization, which is global, fast-paced and changeable. We had confidence that the system was flexible, we wanted to configure it rather than customize it. It was a cloud product which also fits into our IT strategy and it links up with other HR systems," MacDonald explained.

The company was also satisfied that it could go in and configure the product without the need for a third party.

Betfair also wanted to add recruitment, management and benefit modules as part of its HR system, and it was able to do this with Sage Business Cloud People.

Furthermore, the company was able to localize the product for its sister companies in other locations.

"We have sister companies that form part of the Betfair Group in countries such as Romania, Portugal and the US, where there is certain legislation and things we have to adhere to in HR. We therefore had to configure the product accordingly, and we got reassurance from Sage Business Cloud People that we would be able to do that," MacDonald said.

He added that the system had a "clear look and feel to it" from an end-user perspective, something that wasn't always apparent in SAP, which he dubbed "clunky".

MacDonald said that the annual cost of the system compared to the SAP solution was "about a quarter of the price... That's a significant cost saving for us," he said

Implementation

The company set a three-month time period for implementation, partly because it was keen to move to a new system before the contract for the SAP system came up for renewal.

MacDonald suggested that the company had some challenges along the way, but it hit its deadline and went live in April this year. The biggest of the challenges was migrating data from SAP to the new system.

"Making sure there was no loss of, or damage to, data was always going to be the biggest challenge and that was the most time-consuming: making sure that we were taking data out of the old system and putting in the new system in the right format," said MacDonald.

"But Sage was very supportive, they have a very good data import tool, but it was still time-consuming as it was five years' worth of employee data, including historic data," he continued.

The other key challenge was getting the HR team "on board" with the system, and ensuring that they would be easily able to use it. "We had to ensure that we had training materials, including videos, to give them the guidance and make sure the system was intuitive enough so that people would pick it up quickly," said MacDonald.

Betfair CIO Michael Bischoff said that the implementation of the new system was "straightforward and painless".



"The speed at which the solution was delivered, and the ease of the rollout, once again illustrates the benefits of our strategic move to using software-as-a-service platforms."

Michael Bischoff,
Chief Information Officer,
Betfair