At a glance - Makevale Group

MakevaleGroup

Objective

To implement a global ERP solution and unify processes across business sites.

Solution

SAP Business One

Key wins

- Added value to the business
- Unified disparate systems and processes
- Improved batch traceability
- Time savings

Organisation

The Makevale Group produce premium quality plastics and acrylic-based polymers for a wide variety of industries. These polymers can be found in dental & biomedical products, civil & military aircraft, submarine cockpits, paints, lubricants and mobile phones.

With headquarters near London, but sites in India, Germany and America, the company distributes its products to over 100 countries worldwide.

As Makevale's operations continue to develop overseas, the company's Director, Dr Sam Ahir, decided it was the right time to switch enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

"Although our previous solution worked very well for a long time, there were limitations to the software, particularly when it came to international operations. So it seemed like the right time to switch to a global system and unify our processes," he said.

Sam found SAP Business One was a highly recognised brand and provided the complete, slick package the company was seeking. The decision was made to implement the system across all sites in the UK, India and USA.

Now the system is live, Sam said everything is performing to expectation.

"SAP Business One is doing exactly what we want, now we are just working on tidying up our accounts, and training staff on the system. We're very pleased and in terms of managing everything from a group perspective it's a much easier affair," he said

"It is difficult to measure specific benefits in terms of tangible return on investment, but this wasn't the primary objective for us. The biggest issue was our disparate systems, so there's been an

immediate improvement on that front. What I will also say is by adopting one system across all sites we have added extensive value to the business bottom line.

"When it comes to batch traceability, SAP Business One is leaps ahead of anything out there and Sapphire also did some additional bespoke work to further improve this functionality. In the current climate, with very strict legislation around batch control, a business can be shut down if you can't provide complete traceability," Sam added.

The company also now saves time each day in terms of their production processes and has fundamentally improved management procedures. Sam also said there are some strong reasons to recommend SAP Business One, especially for the small and medium sized enterprise (SME) market.

"The SAP brand is so widely recognised and accepted around the globe; the moment you say you're using SAP people just assume positive things about your company and that is a big deal," he said.

"Plus SAP Business One is a fantastic platform, it's very flexible and the accounting side is the strongest we've ever seen. We used to use Sage Line 50, which was fine for a single operation in the UK. But if you outgrow this solution it's not an easy leap to the next level,

it's actually a brand new system. So if you're going to consider a brand new system anyway, you have to ask yourself, should I use SAP Business One?

"We reviewed the market extensively and if you have global ambitions you really need to consider SAP Business One, as it has the best localisation. It's very cost effective if you're an SME with operations abroad, which applies to many companies these days," he said.

One feature Makevale's accountants love is the ability to access the journal behind every single transaction immediately.

"It may sound trivial but all incoming and outgoing payments have a journal entry, and with one click you can see it straight away. That is truly powerful financial control and it's very useful to have that level of traceability and tracking. That functionality simply doesn't exist in other systems," Sam said.

Selecting a provider

After a survey of the market, Sapphire was chosen as a solution partner, with the company's superior support services playing a major part in the final decision.

"The deal Sapphire offered was competitive, but for us the key benefit was definitely having the support across the different sites," Sam said.

"We have factories in India, America and the UK, and our people really appreciate being able to speak not just to a central service team but a local team as well. I'm aware that other companies team up with third parties to provide global support, but that wasn't good enough for us," he said.

"So ultimately one of Sapphire's biggest strengths is having offices abroad. The round the clock support has been immeasurable helpful, if we've ever had any issues we've got people solving them, no matter what time of day," Sam said.

Sam stressed that the level of service from Sapphire is always high and the Makevale team are comfortable talking directly with the team.

"Sapphire's team is very professional and our consultant was absolutely out of this world. He was capable and knowledgeable and kept things moving at a considerable pace. Other business owners also had positive things to say about Sapphire, which made it clear they had a similar experience," Sam said.

Tips for other businesses

For Sam the bottom line is to choose an ERP system that's right

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> Company Director

for your business and gives you scope to grow, and he offered the following advice about the process:

•No system will ever work unless your people accept it and use it correctly, so once you're committed let everyone in the organisation know the new system is coming and that it won't necessarily be an easy process

•The key thing I would say is the CEO must have the tightest control of the general ledger codes. Unifying GL codes across sites and really understanding you accounts structure sets the best groundwork for future growth of the business accounting policy and business control.

•Ask users to list three key metrics they utilise to determine whether things are going well. Then build the system to ensure that key information is available to the user, quickly.

•Dedicate plenty of time to your system design document (SDD). It must be realistic; the key is to keep it as simple as possible while still maintaining your objectives. It is critical to get the SDD right if you wish to implement on time and on budget. Do not rush reading it. Ensure many people in and outside your day-to-day business provide feedback.

•The magnitude of what each user does is so complex, so complete testing can take a long time but is very necessary.

•By their very nature implementations can be unpredictable, so be prepared that the process will nearly always take longer than you predict.

•Try and keep the system as simple as possible, but audit your business processes – if there is a way of doing something useful in one click instead of three then build it in.

Ultimately Sam said the Makevale team learnt a lot, but even after going live they still encountered things they should have done differently.

"We got some things wrong, but that educated us very quickly, and when situations like that arise you have to be flexible and roll with the punches.

"Although the main project is over we still have things to do, but now we feel we're on the right platform to really see us through to the next stage of our business," he concluded.