

Sapphire Case Study: Amanda Wakeley



"If you take IT seriously, you look at the best – and SAP is the number one brand."

Dr Jamil El Imad,
President, W Investments

SAP Business
One

Amanda Wakeley launched her signature label in 1990 and has since developed an international reputation for designing some of the world's most luxurious, elegant women's clothing and accessories. Following the recent purchase of the company by W Investment Holdings, a private equity investment company, Amanda and her new partners are currently in the throes of executing plans for the global development of the Amanda Wakeley brand. Included in this plan is a new management structure to allow for international growth, retail expansion and the development of multiple brand extensions.

Subsequent to the acquisition, Dr Jamil El Imad, President of W Investments, wanted to implement a business management solution that would reduce overheads and facilitate the efficient management of Amanda Wakeley Ltd.

Jamil's extensive knowledge of accounting and business solutions stood him in good stead when selecting SAP Business One as the optimum solution for Amanda Wakeley. Jamil said: "SAP Business One is known as reliable application that encompasses ERP (enterprise resource planning), production and accounting as well as CRM (customer relationship management) and opportunity management – features which are important in helping to support Amanda Wakeley's expansion plans." Jamil continued "CRM and opportunity management are not always considered important by smaller companies, but these are good systems to have in place and I was keen to implement them sooner rather than later at Amanda Wakeley."

He goes on to say "If you take IT seriously, you look at the best - and SAP is the number one brand. I have been involved in large SAP implementations previously, and was interested to see how it would work for a smaller organisation. Having explored its capabilities, I felt SAP Business One to be a good first step for small to mid-size companies as it is scalable and has good integration links with other systems. What's more, I felt it to be well balanced between accounting and ERP - unlike other packages which are strong financial products, but don't manage any other aspects of the business particularly well. If you have serious intent in terms of putting strong IT infrastructure in place, SAP Business One is the ideal solution."

Having taken the decision to implement SAP Business One, Jamil set about finding the top provider of the solution to be Amanda Wakeley's business partner. To do this he conducted online searches and research, as well as taking advice and investigating recommendations from his contemporaries. He tells us "We were looking for a good SAP reseller with a good reputation and Sapphire fitted the bill. I did my homework in terms of who's out there, looking at case studies, media and accounting information and came to the realisation that Sapphire were on a similar wave-length to us – it was a clear decision to choose them over other providers."

When asked how he had reached his decision Jamil goes on to explain "The Sapphire team were very focused during the initial phases of our search for the right business partner – they were very responsive and moved at a rapid speed. After we acquired

AMANDA WAKELEY



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Amanda Wakeley there was a certain level of urgency in getting a good IT infrastructure in place and Sapphire were not only reliable, but gave us the information we needed in a timely fashion.”

During the early stages of the implementation Jamil observed “Sapphire gave us very good support in getting the project off the ground. It was useful to be able to speak to people that understand business language.” He adds “I set a tough target of 4 weeks for the initial roll-out phase of the project, although realistically I would have been happy with a period of up to 3 months. The end result far exceeded my expectations: the solution was live after 4 weeks and within 6 weeks we had all our data migrated too. As was expected we had a few teething problems but, by working with Sapphire, it has been possible for us to overcome all hurdles.”

One of the key benefits that the team at Amanda Wakeley are seeing as a result of implementing SAP Business One is a reduction in administrative work that results in a higher level of productivity. Six Amanda Wakeley sites use SAP Business One, with an average of sixteen people logged in at any one time – a figure which is set to double over the coming year.

Jamil tells us “The system works; it’s good. We are now able to process all business transactions online and obtain relevant information faster. Before we implemented SAP Business One it used to take up to 6 weeks to get month-end information, whereas now it takes just 2-3 days. The ability to get financial documentation sooner means we can act on the information faster, which ultimately gives us a competitive advantage as an organisation. The business world is so dynamic; you need to be able to make well informed decisions.”

Speaking on using the solution Jamil says “SAP Business One is easier to use than Microsoft Office in terms of usability, and it is very easy training users that are new to the system. As you get to know a system you want to get more out of it and we plan to change some of our reporting, as we now have a demand for further reporting that we did not initially envisage we would require. I am still looking for the most structured and efficient way of changing reporting – and, going forward, our team will look to obtain best practice knowledge on report generation.”

Looking to the future the team at Amanda Wakeley plan to integrate SAP Business One with their website so that there is an interface with point-of-sale on the www.amandawakeley.com e-store.

Sharing his experience in implementing financial accounting and business solutions, Jamil comments “I find that if you know what you want, it is best to be pragmatic. Make sure you choose the right software for your organisation and do your homework – there is a plethora of information available in the public domain. My main reason for recommending SAP Business One to others would be the scalability of SAP products and the fact that the platform is affordable: I feel that we are getting good value for money.”

In conclusion Jamil says “As a small business it is important for us to stay in touch with our solution providers and receive a good level of service and support, which we do with Sapphire. The IT world has a lot of cowboys and we are glad to have found a reliable and professionally run company as a business partner.”