

Sapphire Case Study: Sahara Presentation Systems



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Nigel Batley, Finance Director



Sahara Systems plc is one of the leading manufacturers and distributors of interactive audio visual solutions in the UK. The company was formed in 1925 and, since the 1970s, has promoted products into the AV (audio visual), office products and education industries. Based in Kent, Sahara distributes AV products via a network of 500 reliable and experienced dealers throughout the UK and in over 50 countries worldwide.

Nigel Batley, Finance Director, and his team at Sahara were looking for a new financial accounting solution that would offer improved integration with other systems, such as Microsoft Excel. In the longer term, since Sahara's Internet presence has evolved from a simple brochureware site to a fully functioning e-commerce website, they also wanted the ability to integrate their financials with their website.

Nigel and Liam Dorrian, Sahara's Financial Controller, decided that their preferred option would be to implement a solution from a large company that would provide investment, research and development into the product, therefore making it a sound long-term proposition. Following an extensive review period they short listed Sage, Microsoft Great Plains, Microsoft Navision and SAP Business One, before concluding that SAP Business One would be the best fit for Sahara. Nigel said "We felt SAP Business One to be a more cost-effective solution than Sage and the other solutions offered. We were also concerned that Microsoft may merge their accounting solutions, which could cause issues for us down the line. In addition, we thought that SAP Business One had the greatest ease of use and it came across very well in our comparisons".

When asked how the implementation period compared with his expectations, Nigel stated "Implementation was very quick; we placed our order at the end of September and had our first meeting in mid October, the solution went live on 1st January, which is the start of our financial year. I did feel that this was a tight period, but at the same time felt that this was the right approach for us, as we were very keen to have SAP Business One in place at the start of the New Year. This was no mean feat when you consider that we got everything done over a period of time that included the Christmas holiday season and, on top of that, one of the key members of our team took time off to get married!"

Since going live with SAP Business One, Nigel observes "Sahara have benefited considerably from the ability to export information to Microsoft Excel. Serial Number Checking [whereby distribution of coded products can be tracked] has improved along with the expanded integration capabilities - and this is just the start of a longer roll-out period."

He goes on to say "SAP Business One is very easy to use, and we have had no problems training people in using it... even those who claim they are no good with computers! We typically have 33 users logged into the system and, although it is in use



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on only one site at the moment, we do have plans to expand this to other locations. Looking to the future we will also integrate SAP Business One with the website.”

In offering advice to other companies reviewing their financial accounting systems, Nigel says “I firmly believe that you need to be careful to choose a company with a good software product and a sizable customer base. Make sure that there will be investment and development into the solution that you purchase. One of the reasons that we chose SAP Business One is that it has excellent integration capabilities. At the moment Microsoft is the main player for desktop and productivity applications and SAP Business One integrates very well with that. However if, 10 years from now, there is another bigger force in the software market, I doubt that would be an issue for us, as I am confident that SAP Business One will be able to integrate with that too without causing us any problems.”

Paul Rogers, part of the SAP Business One team at Sapphire also commented “SAP Business One is a sound and solid long-term investment to help manage the financial and business operations of a company. Its scalability and strong integration links with other systems mean that as the business climate changes, users will be in a strong position to move with the times and react and adjust their processes accordingly.”

In conclusion Nigel says “Sapphire was very well represented when we were reviewing solutions available and based on the presentations and demonstrations we saw, and our subsequent experience in using the product, I would have no hesitation in choosing SAP Business One from Sapphire again. It has definitely been the right choice for our company.”