

Sapphire Case Study: Anglican Consultative Council



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Andrew Franklin, Director of Finance and Administration



SAP Business One



About Anglican Consultative Council

There are four instruments of unity that serve the world-wide family of Anglican and Episcopal churches. They are the Lambeth Conference for bishops which meets every 10 years, The Primates Meeting - regular meetings for the senior Archbishops and bishops of the 38 provinces, and the Anglican Consultative Council which meets every three years and includes laity, priests and deacons. The fourth instrument, a focus for unity, is the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his international role of "primus inter pares".

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) exists, inter alia, to facilitate the co-operative work of the member churches of the Anglican Communion, to communicate information about developments in the Provinces, to develop as far as possible agreed Anglican policies in the world mission of the Church and to encourage and guide Anglican participation in important ecumenical dialogues and interfaith work on an international level.

The Anglican Consultative Council Secretariat, known generally as the Anglican Communion Office, is headed by the Secretary General, the Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon and serves all the Instruments of Communion.

Requirements

On his appointment as Director of Finance and Administration at The Anglican Communion Office, Andrew Franklin inherited a DOS-based financial system, written by his predecessor, which was around 8 years old. The fact that it had an old-style green screen, was creaking at the seams and was not easy to maintain meant that the decision to find a new software solution was not a difficult one to make!

Andrew needed a Microsoft compatible solution with the ability to collaborate and share information with colleagues, integrate with Excel and report in multi-currency. Although he had some experience of the type of financial and management solution that was required, he confesses that he had not expected to use a solution from SAP.

Andrew initially considered that an off-the-shelf solution, such as Sage, would be suitable for the needs of the ACC. But he learned that others using such systems had not been impressed with the functionality, and he was concerned that the customer service and support would be limited. Working in a demanding role, and being busy with personnel and administrative tasks, Andrew felt that it would be more prudent to invest in a good system. Shortly after reading an article regarding SAP Business One in the financial press, Andrew received a chance phone call from a reseller, and so ended up short listing just 2 products: Access, as used by several churches and SAP Business One.

In reviewing the systems Andrew realised that there was little difference in price and concluded that the SAP product would be a better fit in the long-term. SAP's strong



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reputation, backing by resellers, and the investment in research and development, meant that Andrew had expected the solution to be much more costly. He was pleasantly surprised to find the whole system was priced according to the number of users, and as an organisation initially requiring just 2 users, SAP Business One would easily fit the ACC budget. The fact that all financial and business modules were included in the price, and that there was no additional charge for upgrades in the software also played a key part in the decision.

During the initial phases of finding the right business solution Andrew commented that the team at Sapphire were dedicated to understanding the current and potential needs of the ACC. Andrew said "Nick Williams in particular gave us all the time we needed and was happy to go over all our concerns". Also, as a company with a turnover on a par with Access, and who spoke so enthusiastically about the SAP Business One solution, he felt Sapphire could be trusted.

The key product features that influenced the decision to purchase SAP Business One were the ability to provide specific, timely information to the relevant stakeholders in the charity, its ease of use and the speed with which information can be retrieved.

Business Benefits

Once the decision had been made to install SAP Business One Andrew commented "The implementation period was really quite quick." He goes on to say "We had 5 days of training over a 6 or 7 week period and were up and running in good time thanks to Sapphire. Our consultant really took the time to understand what we would be using the system for and trained us accordingly on the efficient use of the system. We are now using functions that we didn't initially think we would need to good effect, and are very happy with the system. It is great to have the ability to collaborate and do quick reports for others in the organisation through its easy data transfer links into Excel. With the old system it was often difficult to pull off information that people wanted, and even if we could access the information, we sometimes had to do further manipulation once it was in Excel. It is certainly much more exciting interpreting data and reacting to what people want rather than just providing audit information."

SAP Business One has now been in place at the ACC for a year and Andrew observes "It is very intuitive to use and is great for retrieving information in a simple and timely manner. Being a charity, it is very important for us to know where money is going and what it is being spent on – you can't borrow from one fund to support another – and SAP Business One supports this and other specific charity reporting. With the greater confidence I have in the data that I am producing because of a better accounting system, I am happy to be more open and to disclose information as required to the provinces, the press and on our website. I have been particularly happy with Year-End, which was very difficult with the old system. By using SAP Business One our Year-End was ready a month earlier than usual."

Speaking on the working relationship with Sapphire, Andrew says "The team at Sapphire are all very knowledgeable and the support has been fantastic. I have been particularly impressed with NETAssist, whereby Sapphire's technical support consultant can view our application via web-based technology and quickly investigate and solve any problem. Nick Williams' specialist charity accounting knowledge has been a real bonus and I am very comfortable in working with Sapphire."



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SAP Business One

For other organisations reviewing their financial accounting systems Andrew advises “Look at what you are really trying to achieve – what do you need that you currently don’t have? Take the time to interpret all the information available and make sure that the software is compatible with the hardware that you have.” He also recommends attending relevant seminars, doing plenty of background research in order to “tick all the boxes”.

In terms of long term future development of SAP Business One, Andrew is keen to spend more time on the system and plans to spend year 2 really getting up to speed and looking at utilising further modules such as HR in more depth.

In the immediate future Andrew is looking forward to attending the SAP Business One User Day hosted by Sapphire, in order to speak with other users of the solution and share in their experiences and uses of SAP Business One in order to further make use of the solution and benefit the ACC.

Nick Williams, Not-for-Profit divisional manager at Sapphire, concludes “It is very rewarding to see an organisation that had not initially considered implementing SAP Business One using it to such good effect. The fact that the Anglican CC had their Year-End ready a month earlier than usual really is testament to the outstanding functionality of the solution.”