

## Case Study

### Partners Group

*Imagine your company is enjoying growth that's far outstripping the competition, that your clients are delighted with your services - and that your staff are the very best in the business. Now imagine that this success is being jeopardised by IT systems that are creaking under the weight of all the new data that's being added as a result of your expansion.*

*If you don't fix it, your ability to make fast, accurate business decisions will vanish, your employee moral will evaporate under the weight of low-value administration tasks – and all your hard work in building your reputation as a great service provider will be under threat because customer information is held across several business systems that don't communicate with each other. This is the problem that faced Partners Group. Fortunately, they recognised the need to replace their systems before it affected business. And here is how they did it...*



#### Introduction

Established in 2000, Partners Group provides specialist talent management and recruitment services. Specialising in a number of niche sectors (as shown in the diagram below) allows Partners Group the advantage of gaining much deeper levels of industry knowledge - vital in what has become a vastly commoditised and competitive marketplace.



In fact, so successful is their approach that, in 2004, they realised a phenomenal organic growth rate of some 120%.

Underpinning Partners Group's success is three guiding business principles - familiar to many businesses today:

1. **Retention:** Retain both clients and staff at a level higher than the industry benchmark.
2. **Growth:** Surpass a targeted 50% year-on-year growth
3. **Market Performance:** Outperform their direct competitors in revenue growth.

To ensure these principles are met, Partners Group:

- ▶ Closely monitor and analyse their business performance
- ▶ Ensure that their client's expectations are surpassed at every opportunity

- ▶ Keep staff motivated and appropriately rewarded for outstanding performance across every area of the business

To support these principles, Partners Group used a variety of core financial technologies to produce the key analysis required to understand and measure past and current business performance. However, as the business was growing so rapidly, the finance department soon realised that they would need to replace these technologies in order to keep up with the pace of business growth. Tinder Mundair, Financial Controller for Partners Group explains; “In order to maintain our growth rates we knew that we needed to provide more in-depth, timely financial and business analysis. Our existing set-up of Access Accounts and Pegasus Opera Payroll had served the business well, but we found that much of the analysis needed to meet our business objectives required a significant amount of data manipulation and spreadsheet consolidation to produce. Our team were also increasingly burdened with a number of labour

capabilities, and its integration with Microsoft Excel – which meant we could continue working with data in an environment in which we were already familiar. The other packages that we reviewed were also module based, whereas SAP Business One offered an integrated solution that included many of the functions needed to support our business.”

Other reasons for selecting SAP Business One included:

**Strong integration links to their new payroll solution:** “we chose Earnie Payroll, which is compatible with SAP Business One and which would mean that the team could approve commission payments without manually rekeying information”.

**Exceptional analysis and drilldown capabilities:** “including Vision for SAP Business One would enable us to produce a variety of management reports with the ability to drilldown on high-level information at the click of a button.”



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intensive, non-value added activities such as manually consolidating or rekeying information from one system to another – leaving us with less and less time to produce meaningful analysis for business decision-making”.

To overcome these hurdles Partners Group decided to purchase a new solution that would give them all the information they needed in one, centralised system. Tinder remarks “We decided to include SAP Business One on our shortlist as we were aware of SAP’s excellent reputation for providing complete end-to-end business management solutions. Our initial view of SAP was that it would be far too big and complex for an organisation of our size, but we were surprised when SAP proved they could deliver a cost-effective solution that was suitable for the SME market”. Tinder continues, “Our final decision to purchase SAP Business One was influenced by a number of factors which included its strong analysis

**Ease of Use:** “we felt that the user-friendly screens, and integrated application sharing the same look and feel would make it easier to train staff”.

Of Sapphire, Tinder says “We selected Sapphire to install and support SAP Business One as they had demonstrable experience of implementing similar systems within our industry. This meant they already knew many of our expectations, they understood our business processes - and they could translate these into designing our final application. In addition, we learnt that Sapphire’s personnel had an average industry and solution experience of some 6 years - giving us confidence that they would be able to deliver our system to our specifications”.

Once the decision to use SAP Business One had been made, work began on migrating their data from the existing finance package. Tinder says “the implementation took several months to complete. During this time we set up our Chart of

Accounts, migrated all our historical data, set up our management reports and trained our users on the system itself. At this stage we now have 5 users on SAP Business One and are live with our Financials, Analysis, Customer and Human Resources components. This means, we are now able to store much more information on our clients, and we're able to manage our Contractors within the same system – making our payment processes much more efficient - and reducing the amount of manual reporting the team has to undertake.”

Using SAP Business One solution also means that Partners Group can now have client and employee data that's in the same core system as their Financials – giving the finance team an endless variety of analysis reports, to support their goals including:

**Retention:** Retain both clients and staff at a level higher than the industry benchmark.

- ▶ Historical analysis on client revenues and profitability over any specified time period.

**Market Performance:** Outperform their direct competitors in revenue growth

- ▶ Real-time information on tenders, quotations, candidate placements and bookings.
- ▶ Aggregate analysis by industry, geography, business unit and employee - across a variety of time-periods.
- ▶ Timely, accurate operational insight for more informed decision-making.

Partners Group intend to develop and expand their use of SAP Business One over the coming months. Tinder says “we aim to have 10 users on the system by the end of the year. Our Bank will provide a banking solution that integrates to SAP Business One - offering even more process automation to reduce rekeying, improve accuracy and deliver time savings.”

In summary, Tinder concludes “SAP Business One is a great system that lends itself well to the SME marketplace. As SAP Business One is a single system, the data is incredibly easy to



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- ▶ A summary of fees earned by consultants, together with commission payable.
- ▶ Direct integration links to the payroll system to ensure that staff are paid in a timely manner.

**Growth:** Surpass a targeted 50% year-on-year growth

- ▶ Management Reporting that helps identify trends and alerts the business to any changes in profitability, margin or revenues.
- ▶ Drill-down facilities on headline financial information to review and understand underlying transaction details.
- ▶ Real-time data exports to spreadsheets for scenario planning and business modeling.

manipulate, the reports are expansive in both type and detail - and our users find the system simple enough to be able to train on-the-job. Post-implementation, the Sapphire Helpdesk has been a fantastic resource. Response times to our queries were exceptional and the team's knowledge has helped us extract information in a number of ways we hadn't thought possible.” She continues “SAP Business One will support the requirements of our long-term business plan and we would recommend that companies considering a replacement finance and business management system review SAP Business One as part of their software selection process.”

For further information on Sapphire and the services that we provide, please email [info@sapphiresystems.co.uk](mailto:info@sapphiresystems.co.uk) or telephone 020 7648 2000.