

Sapphire Case Study: International Power



"MaxiSun has proved that it can save considerable time and expense in the data transfer process"

Bill Hogg, International Power



International Power is the UK's leading global independent power generation company with interests in 37 power stations in 18 countries around the world. International Power's asset portfolio can generate enough power to light up 270 million light bulbs at any one time – and is equivalent to the total power generation capacity in the Czech Republic. Formed in October 2000 by the de-merger of National Power, International Power is currently listed on the London and New York Stock Exchanges. Since de-merger, International Power has increased its international presence by building new generating assets in the US, Australia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE and through the acquisition of plants in Australia, Bahrain Czech Republic, Indonesia, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Turkey, Spain, Thailand, Czech Republic, the UAE and the UK.

International Power's IT strategy is to ensure that all power stations within its asset portfolio are running 'best-of-breed' business applications. These include SunSystems - implemented in each station to support the financial accounting processes - and the MAXIMO Asset Maintenance Management System – a solution that helps International Power to ensure that their revenue-generating equipment is operating at peak availability with minimal expensive outages (turbine downtime).

Bill Hogg, IT Project Manager, at International Power said: "Ours is an international business and we chose the best-of-breed route to offer our stations some degree of autonomy. By avoiding the Corporate ERP¹ route it affords each power station the ability to run its own business independently and the flexibility to tailor the products to both the business requirements and local market. Our key aim is to run our stations with maximum availability and so it makes sense for us to use the top of the range solution in each application area and integrate them accordingly".

To integrate these solutions, the company has implemented a data conversion module named MaxiSun – a solution that allows International Power to automatically transfer commercial data between Maximo MMS and SunSystems. Bill said "We chose to implement MaxiSun in our power stations, as its data transfer automation tool saves us a significant amount of time that would otherwise be spent in entering data into each system. In addition, as it's automated, MaxiSun allows us to have up-to-date financial information for commitment accounting² whenever it's needed."



¹ Enterprise Resource Planning

² Commitment Accounting enables companies who operate largely on the basis of a fixed income better manage their finances. Traditional accounting solutions usually tend to be retrospective by recording the spend after it has happened. This means that a company could find that an order placed with a supplier may lack the funds with which to pay for the goods/services - as the funds have already been committed elsewhere. To overcome this problem, the Commitment Accounting system was devised to help companies understand how much of their income is already committed to paying for goods on order - and how much remains to be spent.



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The MaxiSun solution features a range of inbuilt configuration tools that converts third-party transactions and system data into double-entry SunSystems data. Amongst the benefits that MaxiSun offers are:

- A significant reduction in data-processing time by finance staff.
- Accurate data processing between two (or more) third party software applications and SunSystems
- A potential reduction in software user counts
- Automated data transfer schedule (*frequency can even be as often as every second if required*).
- Robust routines to guarantee data rollback and recovery in the event of a third party system failure.
- Full archiving and audit trail of all interfaced data – ensuring compliance with Sarbanes Oxley standards of auditability and security.

A key saving for International Power in using MaxiSun is that of time and expense. Bill continues: "In our Rugeley site, for example, if we didn't have the MaxiSun module, we would need additional human resource in the finance team – and so it is saving us significant amount on staff and labor costs." Bill also thinks that the speed in which MaxiSun can be implemented is another major advantage. He said: "With MaxiSun being an out-of-the-box application, we find it very quick to implement and it can be live in a very short space of time".

Bill has been working with Sapphire (the authors of MaxiSun and the global number one reseller for SunSystems) over a number of years. During this time, Bill and the Sapphire team have managed 8 separate implementations in countries that include: United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, and Oman, so far. Of his relationship with Sapphire, Bill says: "We find that we have a very productive relationship with Sapphire. They offer us a team of highly specialized consultants who are available to help us implement our MaxiSun solutions around the world. Their in depth knowledge of both SunSystems and Maximo is vital in this respect. It is also important for us to have consistency of support for our global sites and the Sapphire MaxiSun team have all worked on projects at International Power over the past 5 years... we find this a major advantage as there is no learning curve when a new project is initiated".

In terms of recommending MaxiSun as an integration tool, Bill concludes: "MaxiSun has proved that it can save considerable time and expense in the data transfer process – and for that reason alone it is a solution that I would recommend other companies should consider. However, I also find that Sapphire's experience and longevity of support is key in supporting the implementation long term and so I would recommend that companies that are looking for an integration solution talk to the Sapphire team about their needs."

Sapphire recognizes that there are many companies who use Microsoft or SAP applications for their financials. To accommodate these applications, Sapphire have expanded MaxiSun to include automated interfaces to Microsoft Great Plains and Navision, mySAP and SAP Business One applications (MaxiPlains, MaxiNav and MaxiSAP respectively). As with MaxiSun, all data output templates are supplied pre-configured in a 'Best Practice' format and it is from this 'Best Practice template' start point that Sapphire initiate each client implementation.

