

Opal Wave's technical prowess smoothes transfer of global financial systems at Morgan Crucible

In 2007, Morgan Crucible decided to upgrade the global financial management software that had served the Group for over 12 years. This presented a perfect opportunity to convert the company's consolidation procedures to a centralised system and reduce reporting times.

SAP BPC (formerly OutlookSoft) was selected for the new platform. Needing specialist technical expertise, SAP engaged Opal Wave as the specialist consultant on the project. Opal Wave's BPC/OutlookSoft knowledge proved invaluable in sizing and specifying a new centralised operation with built-in high availability and resilience. The new system will support 300 users worldwide, with a proposed reduction of 15% in the month-end reporting timetable.

David Honour is Group Financial Systems Manager at Morgan Crucible. In 2007, he faced a challenging year.

Infor's FDC consolidation and reporting application was planned to be phased out. Morgan Crucible's entire forecasting, budgeting and reporting systems would need to be moved onto a new platform.

Morgan Crucible manufactures carbon and ceramic components for use in a wide variety of sophisticated applications. Its four divisions operate in approximately 90 manufacturing plants in 40 countries.

Installing 300 users on the company's reporting systems was a challenge – and an opportunity.



Minimising risk

"The new system will give greater flexibility in our financial reporting and the ability to satisfy non-financial reporting requirements across the Group," David explains. "A successful transfer is all about minimising risk during the swap over and in the new system itself."

From a short list of IBM/Cognos, Hyperion, Infor MPC and OutlookSoft (later SAP BPC), David's team selected OutlookSoft for its flexibility and the familiarity of its interface to existing FDC users.

Morgan Crucible's implementation of OutlookSoft was one of the first major deployments of SAP BPC after SAP acquired OutlookSoft in May 2007. SAP required additional technical expertise to ensure a smooth transfer of operations with minimum risk. It invited Opal Wave, one of its top SAP BPC Service Partners, to join the project.

Opal Wave was responsible for specifying and implementing a technical solution that would be capable of meeting Morgan Crucible's exacting requirements.

High availability and high resilience were key elements of the new system, ensuring 24x7x365 operation worldwide. Centralising financial operations also altered the architecture of the new system significantly.

Important expertise

Opal Wave's technical expertise was particularly important in the sizing of the new system. Technical Director, Ahtishaam Khan explains:

"High availability and resilience requirements inevitably add to the hardware required. The design we put in place for Morgan Crucible achieved the desired service levels but made efficiencies. For example, paired servers can balance workload when required, but maintain operations without interruption if one fails."

David Honour was impressed: "The consultants at Opal Wave really know their stuff. They earned the respect of my team, and they have worked seamlessly and professionally with us throughout the project."

The new centralised reporting, budgeting and forecasting system at Morgan Crucible is due to go live at the end of 2009. The initial collection of Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) data has proved a successful trial for the primary financial reporting objective that will commence with the collection of the 2010 budget data in autumn of 2009.

Depending on Morgan Crucible's requirements, Opal Wave may act as a technical partner and/or in an overall project management capacity. Opal Wave provides on-going development and support services to customers too. This includes Morgan Crucible where Opal Wave has been involved in subsequent improvements and extensions to the new global system. In February 2009, Morgan Crucible awarded a formal support contract to Opal Wave.



"We have a very good working relationship with Opal Wave. I have absolute confidence in their technical expertise and the quality of advice they provide. Opal Wave's consultants have become an integral part of the project team," David Honour concludes.



OPAL WAVE are specialists in enterprise performance management. Opal Wave's goal is to provide better performance management, where the solution provided is aligned with the client's business objectives, responsive to the needs of all its users, and adaptable to changing business circumstances.

The company supports clients throughout the life of their performance management system, guiding them in the creation of the correct performance management strategy, implementing the software solution, training users, and providing post-implementation hosting and support. All Opal Wave's projects are managed and staffed by people with many years experience in this field. Clients of Opal Wave include Mott MacDonald, Morgan Crucible, BAA and Vodafone.

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