

Success Story

Canonical innovates in HR with Sage People

Hi-tech company behind Ubuntu, selects Sage People to further drive innovation into the business as it expands across the globe



Canonical, the company behind the Ubuntu open-source operating system, is moving to HR technology as a service as it expands its world-wide business.

The company, which has grown from a startup to a 600-strong business in 10 years, is replacing home-grown software and spreadsheets with a single company-wide HR system with Sage People.

Company
Canonical

Location
United Kingdom

Industry
Technology & Software

Sage Products
Sage People

CANONICAL

About Canonical

Canonical — the company behind the Ubuntu open-source operating system — has grown from a startup to a 600-strong business in 10 years.

Sage



Canonical evaluated HR technology from a range of IT suppliers.

Limitations of existing HR technology

Canonical began looking for alternative HR technology after it became clear that the company had outgrown its existing HR systems.

“We got to the point where we could not scale, we simply could not move forward in what we wanted to achieve with our previous set of systems,” says Steve George, former Vice President of Operations, Canonical.

He continues, “There was too much manual inputting. And because the data stores were not synchronized correctly, we were not confident that the data was reliable. The systems were also difficult for employees to use, requiring them to phone the HR department if they wanted to update their contact details, for example.”

Selecting the right system

Canonical evaluated HR technology from a range of IT suppliers, including Microsoft and Oracle. “The priority was to find a HR system that was flexible, could automate workflows and be integrated into other software packages,” said Steve. Avoiding supplier lock-in was another priority. “We are a mid-sized software company and we are growing rapidly. I don’t want to be locked into a particular package. I need to have flexibility for the business. Something that offered all the capabilities, but the data was inaccessible, was not something I wanted to do,” he said.

The company produced a shortlist of four potential suppliers and tested their technology in a series of trials, using real company data. “Sage People are one of the new suppliers in this space, and they are still orientated towards innovation, adding new capabilities, and they were aware of the challenges we were facing as a mid-sized organization,” says Steve.

“Many people benefit from formal training, but others learn more effectively from working on special projects, while for some, being assigned a mentor. The company plans to use talent-management capabilities to record and track employees; skills and development plans, and their training preferences.”



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Innovation that drives business outcomes

“Ultimately it is about being able to successfully drive innovation in the business,” he said. “People need to be challenged. We need to understand what they are interested in and how they are motivated.”

The project has given Canonical confidence that its HR records are accurate and up to date. Cleaning the HR data, which was stored in multiple locations, proved to be the most difficult challenge in rolling out the Sage People system.

“Making sure the data was clean and correct and output into a format we could use, that was the number one issue,” he said. “Employees, many of whom work from home, can access the HR system over the internet, book holidays and keep their personal details up to date. The system has also saved the IT team time,” Steve revealed. “I have had to put in far less effort to keep the system up and running. I have been able to shut down legacy systems and I have had fewer issues over data quality.”

Canonical plans to develop the platform by centralizing its payroll reporting across the 20 countries. The company also has plans to use the system to track the pensions of its employees.



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