

Success Story

Building a small business with Sage

ERP Assistance has thrived with reliable accounting tools since its founding

“I’d used Sage before, so when we started the business I knew we needed that software.”

Barry Hughes

Owner, ERP Assistance



The Challenge

When Barry and Deborah Hughes set up ERP Assistance in 2018, they knew that high quality accounting software was vital to ensure the accuracy, accessibility and compliance of their financial data and processes, leaving them free to focus on establishing the business.



The Solution

In his previous role as an accountant, Barry had worked extensively with accounting software, including Sage products. He knew that Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll together would support this small business and provide the functionality required without the ‘bloat’ associated with bigger systems.



The Result

ERP Assistance is thriving and Sage still underpins its financial and administrative processes. Advantages include 24/7/365 access to comprehensive and reliable business information; straightforward MTD compliance; and bank feeds that automate potentially time-consuming tasks and eliminate error.

- Reliable, real-time business data accessible at all times.
- Increased ease of maintaining MTD compliance.
- Link to bank account saves time, ensures accuracy.

Company
ERP Assistance

Location
United Kingdom

Industry
Technology & Software

Sage Products
Sage Accounting, Sage Payroll

ERP Assistance

About ERP Assistance

ERP Assistance is an expert consultancy that comprehensively guides and assists businesses implementing or upgrading their Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.



From accountant to technology business owner

Barry and Deborah Hughes founded ERP Assistance just a few years ago, but its roots lie in Barry's previous work experience. He explains: "I used to be an accountant, and every business I worked for ended up changing its ERP system. I worked on the process time and time again and every time I noticed that companies would provide software that was fit for purpose, but nobody actually helped me to implement it. And of course, it's not worth companies having that expertise in-house, because most firms only change ERP once every fifteen to twenty years. So that's where we come in. ERP Assistance helps companies in pain, when they know they need to do something but they don't know what. We help them start the project, gather their requirements and choose the right provider. Then we help them run the project, implement it, and leave them in a business-as-usual state."

Since it was founded in 2018, ERP Assistance has grown to become a respected specialist consultancy, serving businesses in multiple sectors across the UK. Notably, it hasn't undergone major system changes itself: the Sage solutions that helped the company to grow—Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll—still serve the business well today.

Making the right choice

From the outset, Barry recognised the value of choosing the right software for his business and the future he envisaged. Having used Sage software in previous roles, he says: "I did the good old thing where I didn't even bother looking around. I just went, 'I'm going to sign up for Sage.'" However, experience had taught him the value of choosing the right form and combination of solutions—ERP Assistance needed reliable software to meet the needs of a small business and give Barry and Deborah full control and peace of mind, but didn't need the added extras that often come with larger-scale solutions. So, the business began life with Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll—user-friendly, reliable solutions that provide the functionality required to run a small business well.

"Obviously, I know how important it is to record transactions from day one of a business and to get everything linked up and robust," says Barry; he goes on to explain that the bank feed integration in Sage Accounting is key to this because it automatically records transactions. "It's just robust, with efficient processes—I've known from day one that I'm recording all of my costs in the right place for tax purposes, and so on. It's easy."



Sage offers ERP Assistance the reassurance of being up-to-date and having all transactions recorded automatically and correctly.

Easy to implement, easy to use

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the nature of its business, ERP Assistance managed its own setup of Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll, finding it straightforward and, according to Barry, “dead easy to set up, straight out of the box”. Since then, the system has been entirely plug-and-play, with only one call made to Sage for assistance in matching a single payment to multiple invoices—a query quickly resolved by a Sage advisor for future reference.

While ERP Assistance was not specifically concerned with automating processes—although Barry actively looks forward to increasingly widespread and effective use of AI in the future—the business greatly appreciates the automation that comes as standard with Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll. “Three or four clicks and that’s payroll done for the month, and thanks to the bank feeds and the fact that everything’s in the cloud, I can have an up-to-date view of the business at any point in time,” Barry explains. The company has only ever used Sage, so has little to compare hypothetical time savings with, but Barry points out that the bank feed alone is probably saving hours of work per week compared with manual alternatives. However, the reassurance of being up-to-date and having all transactions recorded automatically and correctly, with much reduced risk of human error, is perhaps an even greater benefit.

Making Tax Digital

ERP Assistance has only integrated its Sage products with two external systems, namely the bank feeds and the Making Tax Digital (MTD) bridge. The latter is another key aspect of the reassurance provided by the Sage system: not only does it make the submission of tax returns very easy, it also gives the business reassurance that all MTD regulations and requirements have been complied with.

A professional image

For this small business, using Sage products has also dealt with some of the challenges of marketing and branding, because the templates and guidance built into Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll ensure that the company’s documents, such as invoices, always look professional and comply with regulations. What’s more, sending them by email involves just one click, with no manual uploading required.



“Sage is very intuitive: I’ve only ever needed help once in six years.”

Barry Hughes

Owner, ERP Assistance

Long-term value

Six years after it was founded, ERP Assistance is thriving. Barry and Deborah have no immediate plans for growth, but rather intend to sustain the business in its current state. Much the same goes for their business software: their Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll systems still support the business well and Barry sees no great reason to change. As he puts it: “Sage Accounting and Sage Payroll make sure all my accounts are correct and done on time. I know that my VAT is correct. I know that my corporation tax return is correct. Sage gives me that reliability—I know that bank transactions are reconciled, all the entries are in. Everything’s right.”



Sage

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