

Success Story

Paddy Power Betfair's stake on Sage People pays dividends

Paddy Power Betfair chooses Sage People for flexibility and to reduce complexity of administration across 15 countries



London-based betting exchange Paddy Power Betfair has replaced its ageing SAP HR system with Sage People, which it has implemented in preference to alternatives from Oracle and Workday.

Simon MacDonald, former Head of Talent Acquisition and HR Systems, Paddy Power Betfair, told Computing that he was originally given the task of examining the company's existing HR system to see how it could be improved.

Key outcomes

- Successful implementation for 1,700 employees across about 15 countries in under three months
- Addition of recruitment, management and benefit modules as part of its HR system
- Adapting to local markets legal considerations globally

Company
Paddy Power Betfair

Location
United Kingdom

Industry
Leisure, Media & Entertainment

Sage Products
Sage People



About Paddy Power Betfair
Paddy Power Betfair is a London-based betting exchange company, with over 1,700 employees across 15 countries.



Sage People has allowed Betfair to configure their HR software.

The SAP system had only been in place for about five years, but Simon said that it was a ‘very large-scale enterprise-level system that wasn’t fit for purpose.’

“We are 14 years old, we’ve got 1,700 employees across about 15 countries, we don’t have 20,000 or 50,000 employees so the old system didn’t fit us as a business,” he claimed.

But there were other issues with the SAP product. According to Simon, it was hard to make changes to the system and adapt it to how Betfair wanted it. “It took time, and was complex and costly to make changes, which didn’t fit in with our ethos of being fast-paced and agile,” he said.

The company also had to rely on a systems integrator, which had supported and hosted the SAP solution, for Paddy Power Betfair to make any changes.

Furthermore, Paddy Power Betfair was also not able to roll out the system globally to all of its locations according to Simon because ‘there were certain challenges stopping us from doing so,’ he admits.

This became more apparent when the company looked at offerings from smaller organizations, such as Sage People, TribeHR, SumTotal Systems and Aragon-eRH.

“We picked Sage People because it was a good fit for our organization, which is global, fast-paced and changeable. We had confidence that the system was flexible, we wanted to configure it rather than customize it. It was a cloud product which also fits into our IT strategy and it links up with other HR systems,” Simon explained.

The company was also satisfied that it could go in and configure the product without the need for a third party. Paddy Power Betfair also wanted to add recruitment, management and benefit modules as part of its HR system, and it was able to do this with Sage People.

Furthermore, the company was able to localize the product for its sister companies in other locations.

“We have sister companies that form part of the Betfair Group in countries such as Romania, Portugal and the US, where there is certain legislation and things we have to adhere to in HR. We therefore had to configure the product accordingly, and we got reassurance from Sage People that we would be able to do that,” Simon said.

He added that the system had a ‘clear look and feel to it’ from an end-user perspective, something that wasn’t always apparent in SAP, which he dubbed ‘clunky’.

Simon said that the annual cost of the system compared to the SAP solution was ‘about a quarter of the price. That’s a significant cost saving for us,’ he said.



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Simon MacDonald

Former Head of Talent Acquisition and HR Systems,
Paddy Power Betfair

Implementation

The company set a three-month time period for implementation, partly because it was keen to move to a new system before the contract for the SAP system came up for renewal. Simon suggested that the company had some challenges along the way, but it hit its deadline and went live on time. The biggest of the challenges was migrating data from SAP to the new system. “Making sure there was no loss of, or damage to, data was always going to be the biggest challenge and that was the most time-consuming: making sure that we were taking data out of the old system and putting in the new system in the right format,” said Simon.

“Sage was very supportive, they have a very good data import tool, but it was still time-consuming as it was five years’ worth of employee data, including historic data,” he continued. “The speed at which the solution was delivered, and the ease of the rollout, once again illustrates the benefits of our strategic move to using software-as-a-service platforms.” The other key challenge was getting the HR team ‘on-board’ with the system, and ensuring that they would be easily able to use it. “We had to ensure that we had training materials, including videos, to give them the guidance and make sure the system was intuitive enough so that people would pick it up quickly,” said Simon. Paddy Power Betfair CIO Michael Bischoff said that the implementation of the new system was ‘straightforward and painless’.





Sage

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