# A single source of truth elevates the value of HR at Westcon-Comstor

Technology distribution titan consolidates global HR operations to reduce costs and engage employees



Westcon-Comstor has moved from multiple complex systems across the globe, to one single source of truth enabling better people analytics and great workforce experiences for employees through self-service. As a result, the HR and People team has been liberated from complex processes and admin, and is viewed as a more strategic business partner across the organization.

A global giant in technology distribution for almost 35 years, WestconComstor focuses on supporting businesses with security, networking and datacentre requirements. Working with a range of vendors, from Cisco to Amazon and Microsoft, the global organization uses its prowess in supply chain and global deployment services to ensure partners have the

Serving more than 180 countries from 50 location across the world, the Westcon-Comstor workforce totals almost 3,000, and with consistent new acquisitions over 20 years, this number fluctuates. Whilst this has proved a successful global business strategy, it presents several challenges for the Westcon-Comstor HR and People team.

"We've acquired some great people and businesses, but we've also taken on their systems which have been difficult to integrate," explains Donna Bain, Senior Vice President, International HR, Westcon-Comstor. The HR and People team didn't have a single way of recording information - it was either manual or using multiple systems, which took significant time and resource.

**Company**
Westcon-Comstor

**Location**
United Kingdom

**Industry**
Information Technology

**Sage Products**
Sage People

**Westcon Comstor**

**About Westcon-Comstor**
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## Managing multiple systems

Simply trying to get a headcount report took over a week, and as Donna explains, by the time the the information was gathered, it was already out of date. "It was difficult because I wasn't confident supplying information to the organization," Donna explains worryingly. "Putting my name to a report I knew was wrong was really keeping me up at night."

Managing multiple systems and dispersed data also had a significant impact on the recruitment process. The company had numerous systems for managing job posts and applicant data. With more than 2,000 direct applications, the volume of emails and activities to be monitored was preventing the department from delivering the best possible HR experience to both candidates and its current employees.

## Changing the internal reputation of HR

These inefficiencies also impacted the way the business saw HR, according to Donna. "We were viewed as a transactional department - there to help with admin, headcount or payroll reports," she says sadly. "Most just saw us as a team who did hiring, firing and reporting."

The business wanted the HR team to be consistent across everything from skills monitoring, to appraisals to booking holidays online – across the globe. "But we simply couldn't do that," says Donna.

As an international company, the HR and People team understood that different countries each had their own employment law nuances. However, at Westcon-Comstor, each country had an individual approach to HR – and everything was done on a different timeline.

For example, the pay review process could happen at any time throughout the year, depending on which region employees were in. "Essentially we didn't have one standard way of working and that was a real challenge across the business that needed to change," explains Donna ruefully.

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Westcon-Comstor needed to consolidate HR processes.

## Consolidation into one single source of truth globally

Whilst the HR and People team were keen to ensure they could operate as a single function across the globe, Donna also wanted to ensure that it was the employees at Westcon-Comstor that saw the benefits – not just the HR team.

Donna and the team started a search for a new global cloud HR and People system to revolutionize their approach to HR. They wanted to move away from admin and confusion, towards a single source of truth that would offer great experiences for employees. Sage People fitted all the requirements and more.

"I've never seen an HR team so excited about a new system before," Donna laughs. "To the rest of the business we communicated it as 'self-service HR' – we wanted employees to feel empowered by the system." Now, all employees have the ability to use their own personal local landing page.

"Our managers now use the system constantly," says Donna excitedly. "They know it's the only way we accept their information, whether it's for appraisals, holiday booking or reports – which they can now even do themselves!"

Jessica Davies, IT Manager for HR applications at Wescon-Comstor, concurs that Sage People has encouraged managers and employees to be self-sufficient. "Having Sage People gives us flexibility to allow people to manage their own data and admin." She explains that HR can now access employee data at their fingertips and provide that data to executives, knowing that it's entirely accurate.

For Jessica, the big achievement has been taking different rules and regulations for 51 countries and building that into one consolidated system. "Before, we had multiple methods, whereas now we have one system with a global process and localized rules where required," she explains happily.

"We have ten systems in the business that rely on our HR data and are now connected to Sage People via APIs or general file exchange," she explains excitedly. "Those systems now have access to accurate HR data instantly, so it's not just HR that's streamlined, it's the whole business process."

## Hello agile HR

Jessica loves that Sage People enables the team and the business to be more agile, too. She explains: "With the new releases from Sage People we can access new functionality that we can customize by adding workflows, email triggers, fields and reports. This allows the HR and People team to focus on what we do best: less admin and more time supporting our people."

Donna agrees wholeheartedly. "One of the big benefits for us was the level of customization", she explains. "The business and our processes are constantly changing; the fact that Sage People can change at the same pace gives us the flexibility we need in our growing organisation. HR is now seen as a real business partner."

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Westcon-Comstor moved from multiple, complex systems to one source of truth.

## Efficiencies across the business

For Eric Camier, UK Recruitment Manager at Westcon-Comstor, having Sage People has had a direct impact on his day-to-day role. "Sage People is easy for me to run as a one-man team for the UK, and it's changed the way we do recruitment," he explains. "Part of my role is to lower our reliance on recruitment agencies, and now with Sage People, we've almost doubled the applications we take directly - from 2,000 up to 5,000. This has halved our cost per hire, and our direct recruitment now is 60%, compared to just 20% previously, so we are making a huge saving on agency costs."

It's not just costs that Sage People has helped to lower, according to Eric. "Now we have integrated Sage People into third party platforms, such as Docusign, we have a seamless, paperless recruitment process, which saves me a lot of admin time."

Even the team's vacancy approvals process, which used to be very cumbersome to share around the world, can now be created and approved in minutes. "This all saves me a lot of admin time," explains Eric excitedly. "It means I can produce more offers and secure the best candidates more quickly."
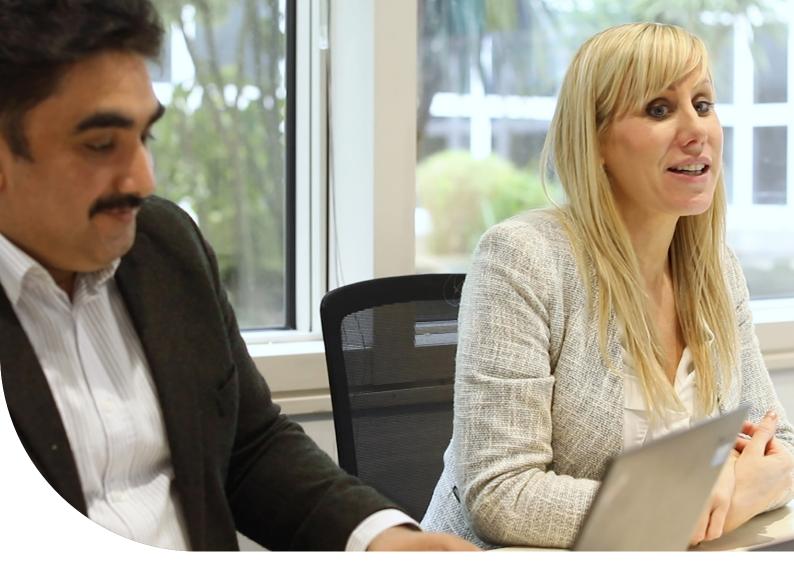
## HR is now a more strategic business function

For Donna, integrating Sage People has had a direct impact on her role. "For me personally, whereas it previously took me a week to pull a headcount report, I can now do that in 10 seconds," she explains

The introduction of Sage People has also had a dramatic and noticeable impact on the HR and People team's reputation across the business. "HR used to be admin function," explains Donna. "Now we have an HR strategy for the next three years, based on retention, recruitment and development. Sage People gives us the tools to be able to do that."

She adds proudly: "The business now sees HR as the one true source of People information. Our global business budgeting was based on information that came from Sage People this year — so that shows the strategic importance and capability of Sage People."

"HR is now seen as a real business partner."

**Donna Bain**
SVP, International HR, Westcon-Comstor

**A future focused on people**

Westcon-Comstor is already thinking about the future and how to expand providing the best experience to its employees to continue to grow retention and engagement within the organization.

Next up for Donna and her team is not just using and reporting on people data, but using it to make truly strategic business decisions, and access actionable insights. "Now we've got the foundations, we need to understand what's happening within our employee base," Donna explains. "For example, really understand why people are leaving and what's driving them." She adds: "Sage People has helped us by collating exit interview data, which is the key to us understanding what we can do differently or better.

Donna concludes proudly: "Sage People is embedded in who we are and the way we work as a Strategic HR and People function. Our appraisals, pay role, pay review - everything we do links back to Sage People. We couldn't function without it!"

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