

CASE STUDY

Delivering global financial reporting

Key partners for a critical project delivery

One of the world's leading Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies, selling its products in over 180 countries. The Unilever of today has been created over many years of mergers and acquisitions. While these have enabled the Group to grow, they have brought with them complications, not least for the Group's IT function, as it has had to address the challenges of bringing together disparate incoming technology platforms and applications.

The function's response has been to try to simplify its IT infrastructure. One important objective has been to transition to a single global SAP financial and management reporting platform, named Victory. We helped them achieve this goal, by reviewing the project underway to deliver Victory, before supporting a project turnaround and ultimately project managing it through to a successful delivery.

“Berkeley did an outstanding job. The key factors that made them successful were the rigour of their project management skills; their willingness to ‘roll up their sleeves’ to really understand the issues and deal with them; and the way they collaborated seamlessly and successfully with our people. We simply could not have done it without them.”

Vice President of Finance Performance & Analytics

Ageing, inflexible systems

The IT systems of a Global Consumer Goods Company, that were used for management and financial reporting were old, nearing the end of their support life, and were inflexible in supporting major business changes. They also wanted to streamline their financial reporting by consolidating the group financial results directly from the source ledgers in each of their 600+ companies ('Legal Entities') around the world – a significant business change.

A project in difficulty

A programme had been mobilised to address these challenges by delivering two things: firstly, a new suite of industry-standard SAP systems for all global management and financial reporting; and secondly, the global business change to adopt financial consolidation by Legal Entity. They asked us for help.

But it soon became clear that the programme was much more difficult than had first been envisaged.

A rapid review

We were asked to review the programme. In just three weeks, one of our consultants interviewed all key team and steering group members, identified the key issues with the programme, and recommend a series of remedial activities to get the programme on track.

“Working on this complex programme was challenging, but very satisfying! Unilever were great to work with, and we had a strong team and a supportive steering group. Working on such a truly international project, with over 100 countries involved, was fascinating - whether it was hyper inflation in Zimbabwe, or week-long power cuts in Senegal, there was always something unexpected going on! Overall, I’m really proud of what the team achieved on this programme.”

Jon Bradbury
Partner



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Managing the turnaround

We were then asked to lead the implementation of the programme turnaround activities identified in the review. This included leading a key piece of re-planning options work.

Taking on delivery

We were then asked to take on the overall programme and project management, including all business and IT aspects, and direct management of all suppliers involved (both on-shore and off-shore).

We managed the programme through to its successful completion, including both the Management Reporting project and the Financial Reporting project (which went live in 9 months later, including the global adoption of financial consolidation by legal entity).

Tangible benefits

The project has left the organisation with a number of tangible benefits, including:

- Replacement of out-of-date and inflexible systems with industry-standard, more modern and flexible SAP systems for all global management and financial reporting
- Significant cost reduction in support and operations of these systems by internally offshoring the work to India
- Eradication of 50+ local consolidation processes with one central consolidation for all 600+ Unilever companies ('Legal Entities').

- Systemisation of the financial consolidation process also provides increased control and less risk of errors
- Improved data quality and integrity through Increased control over off-ledger adjustments and enhanced system 'checks and balances'
- Definition and implementation of a new global Standard Chart of Accounts, which better supports the information requirements of the business and alignment with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)
- Improved functional cost reporting through collection of more consistent and granular cost information, and improved analytic capability.

An award winning effort

This project won the SAP Quality Silver Award for UK & Ireland in the Large Enterprise category. The annual Awards, judged by SAP itself celebrate excellence in the implementation of SAP Projects evaluating projects on the basis of innovative services, proper resourcing and focused execution.