



Customer Success Story
SAP Mid-Market Solution

EDRINGTON GROUP

DELIVERING A SEAMLESS AND SUCCESSFUL SAP UPGRADE

The Edrington Group owns some of the leading Scotch whisky and golden rum brands in the world, including The Famous Grouse, Cutty Sark, The Macallan, Highland Park and Brugal. Headquartered in Glasgow, the company has a number of specialist operations covering every facet of distilling, blending and bottling, as well as marketing. The Edrington Group also exports to over 100 markets.

In April 2010 The Edrington Group was chosen as the "outstanding private company" at the Scotland plc awards.



THE
EDRINGTON
GROUP



As a long-time user of SAP software, The Edrington Group knows how important it is to keep the software up to date. "Our business groups rely on our SAP software," says Alan Carlile, Director of IT, The Edrington Group. "So it's vital that we ensure that it is always fit for purpose, which means upgrading it periodically to ensure a high level of maintenance can be assured and we have the latest functionality."

GOOD PRACTICAL APPRECIATION

Although Edrington already had a great deal of experience from previous upgrades, the company recognised that it needed some external help to make its most recent upgrade successful.

"We have a very good internal team supporting our SAP applications," explains Stephen McGinley, Group IT Manager. "However, we don't have enough resources to support existing systems and undertake an upgrade at the same time. In addition, we are not familiar with the latest SAP releases, so it makes sense to get assistance from an organisation that has implemented it before."

The Edrington Group asked three SAP partners to tender for the work. At the end of an exacting review process Chelford was chosen to help with the upgrade. "We selected Chelford because we'd worked with its consultants before and knew we could work well together again," comments Alan. "During the selection process, the consultants showed a very good practical appreciation of what the upgrade would entail. In addition, their proposal represented good value for money, something that's obviously important to us."

TIMELY AND PROFESSIONAL

Based on its experience with a previous upgrade, Edrington had constructed a detailed upgrade plan. A Project Control Board was chaired by the sponsor, a main board director, and included project managers and representatives from IT, Edrington's business units and Chelford. PRINCE2 was used to manage the overall project and the Project Control Board focused on ensuring that everyone involved delivered their portion of the work in a timely and professional manner.



Teams were structured on a 'buddy' system, with key people from Edrington and Chelford assigned to modules and tasked with managing their part of the work. "The buddy system worked very well as it ensured that everyone knew who they should go through for each module," says Stephen.

The work was split into streams and allocated according to who was most capable of completing it. In addition, key business users were made responsible for detailed testing, which was absolutely crucial. "The project was very fluid to ensure we made best use of the skills we had at our disposal to meet the requirements," adds Stephen.

Training was also an important part of the project plan, and Chelford assisted us with it. "When you upgrade, users can be faced with new functionality and new ways of processing transactions, which can cause disruptions to the business," continues Stephen. "Consequently, it's important that they are given time to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the new revision."

SMOOTH GO-LIVE

At the end of the project go-live went extremely smoothly. "The upgrade was a very successful project," says Alan. "Having main board sponsorship was key, as were the level of testing and the three go-live dry-runs we conducted. What I liked about Chelford was the fact that their people were willing to work collaboratively with us, rather than having their own way of doing things."

"We have around 200 employees using our SAP applications and the business stops if they aren't available," continues Stephen. "To reduce the risk our methodology called for introducing a new server and platform with the upgraded software on it, so we had the luxury of running the old and new systems side-by-side

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Stephen McGinley, Group IT Manager

before we went live with the new revision. It also gave us the peace of mind of knowing that we could revert to the old system if there was a problem at go-live. Chelford's people were very flexible. They worked very well with our own and they brought the project in on budget."

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

The Edrington Group's decision to upgrade was a strategic one, designed to bring their applications to the latest technical revision, although there were some benefits in terms of reduced hardware and software maintenance costs.

However, additional benefits came from an unexpected source. "In both upgrades we've learnt that the surprises don't come necessarily from SAP," says Alan, "they can come from peripheral systems. We had a fork lift truck management system that wouldn't integrate with the new revision of SAP and the supplier wasn't interested in upgrading it. That focused our minds to develop an alternative system. The unexpected benefit was that we took cost out of the business, because we didn't have to pay the original supplier, and we delivered a more stable and integrated solution. Without the upgrade we wouldn't have considered it."

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Alan Carlile, Director of IT

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENTS

Since the upgrade Edrington has constantly been tweaking the systems to improve business processes, including re-writing its legacy production system to interface more closely with SAP. In addition, helped by Chelford, Edrington has extended its use of SAP by implementing the plant maintenance features.

Edrington also expects to replace its whisky stock control system. "The stock control system is core to our company," says Stephen. "Through it we manage all our whisky assets. But it's 20 years old. Chelford are helping us to look at how we can configure the functionality we need in SAP."

GOOD CHEMISTRY

"I'm a great believer in good relationships," says Alan. "With Chelford the chemistry is right. We have a mutual appreciation and respect for what each of us can deliver. I am impressed with the ability of its people to listen, help and facilitate successful projects. We have a shared passion for getting things done properly. It's also particularly useful that Chelford has a base in Scotland. The ability to provide local support was a definitive advantage."

"The success of the upgrade was a result of good, old-fashioned planning, rehearsing, delivery and teamwork," adds Stephen. "Chelford's people are practical, they have their feet on the ground, they appreciate the size and culture of our company and they look after their customers. We have also been dealing with the same people for a number of years now, which is useful as they know our business and systems and we don't have to keep reinventing the wheel."

For further information call Chelford SAP Solutions

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