

Change as good as a rest for Datalex

Switching to a new accounting package was as straightforward as booking holidays online for travel software company Datalex, writes NIALL BYRNE

If you're booking a flight or hotel for an upcoming holiday there's a strong likelihood your transaction will be processed using one of Datalex's products. The travel distribution software and solutions provider is an expert at helping people get from A to B but the company itself decided to make a move to a new accounting package at the end of last year.



Previously Datalex had been using technology that was about eight years old to produce its accounts. It had made acquisitions in that time and now has multiple Subsidiaries, some of which were running their own accountancy systems. "We were using four separate systems to produce our accounts, which led to duplication of work," explains Paul O'Reilly, chief financial officer of Datalex. "Everything had to be checked right the way along to ensure the accuracy of the data so it led to quite a slow process. What would happen, for

example, is Australia would use a different accounting package; they would send their accounts to us, we would upload that to a second system and then consolidate it in a third system so you had three points of checking."



This was not an optimum solution. Last year the company embarked on a detailed tendering process involving its old provider and two other companies, one of which was Exchequer Software. Exchequer came out on top through a combination of offering the best functionality for Datalex's requirements and being competitive on price. The system Datalex ended up installing was Version Exchequer Global v5.7.

The main advantage of the new software is that it easily allows O'Reilly and other senior finance staff and management to have a consolidated view of the whole group, subsidiaries included, whenever they want. This allows for more accurate, up-to-the-minute reporting and facilitates greater business control.

"The new system provides better integration of group data. We use Exchequer to consolidate all our subsidiaries. One of the disadvantages of the old system was if we spotted a mistake we'd have to go back to the original system in Australia and correct the mistake there," says O'Reilly. Now any changes can be processed immediately in a subsidiary company and the change will automatically flow through to the consolidated account using the Exchequer system.

O'Reilly identifies the main areas implementation of the new package has improved upon. "It allows greater drill-down for us; we have increased and more flexible reporting; the consolidation is performed in Exchequer; we've greater control over subsidiaries at head office because everything is on the one server — before we had to wait until the end of the month before a subsidiary sent in their accounts; now if a subsidiary books an entry I can go in and check it and see the most up-to-date data. I don't have to wait until the end of the month."

The process of implementing the new software was relatively straightforward. "For this project I hired a consultant; he worked along with Exchequer," explains O'Reilly. "Datalex provided the chart of accounts, the specific group accounting requirements and Exchequer would have hand-held us through what the system would do for us. We had a clearly defined project plan of what was meant to happen, when it was meant to happen and who was clearly responsible for each part of the plan, be it Exchequer or ourselves.

"We had offsite training for all staff prior to going live and then we oversaw the 'going live' process where all data was transferred across. That was relatively straightforward considering we had to transfer a number of years of historical transactional data. The integrity of this data would all have had to be validated by the accounts team and verified by the consultant. We went live on 1 December 2005."

He says any queries or problems they had were quickly resolved by Exchequer, although there hasn't been a huge amount of support issues.

Alan Connor, commercial director of Exchequer, comments: "The foresight we identified with Datalex as one of Ireland's most successful international software houses appealed to us from the start and we were delighted to work in partnership with Datalex throughout their project."



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