City university

\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

\n[/toc]\n \n

Company: SAPCustomer: City UniversitySubmitted by: HarvardCentroCity University, London, was founded in 1894 as the Northampton Institute and was awarded full university status in 1966. The University has an excellent reputation in professional education, priding itself on close contacts with professional institutions, business and industry and consequently has one of the best graduate employment records in the country.

Although City University is a broad-based university, about one third of the University's overall activity is in business and another third in health-related studies . City University also has substantial expertise in engineering, law, mathematics, informatics, social sciences, creative and cultural subjects, and continuing education and professional development. The University's courses are complemented by an established research programme, with a number of areas of national and international importance. Much of the research is supported by research councils, business, industry, government departments

and the European Union. City University is a large organisation, with nearly 9, 000 students, 1, 300 staff and a turnover of more than £70m.

Identifying a Need

Since 1995, each School in the University has been managed on a devolved basis, with responsibility for its own finances and many other functions. The University has a proliferation of different computing solutions, as each School sought to meet its own needs for management information. A review of the situation convinced City University of the need to be more pro-active in the approach to IT, particularly with regard to financial operations, where it was felt that significant benefits and savings could be made. Following the review, City University chose leading enterprise resource planning software supplier, SAP, to initially implement a financial system, to be followed by purchasing and human resources solutions. Frank Toop, Finance Director at City University, had a vision for a new system: " We needed to make an initial investment, in order to make efficiency savings further down the line.

There was a real need for a central, shared system that each School or department could use, eliminating the previous duplication of records and information." The new system needed:

- The ability to develop the system within the finance department with less reliance on IT professionals
- To be able to extend the user base beyond the finance department with a user friendly system
- To organise in such a way that Schools and Departments shared ownership of the system and treated it as their own

- To extend the functionality to include procurement, for which the finance department would be responsible

Making the Right Choice

City University began the selection process for the new system in February 1997. Frank Toop explains: " We knew that SAP was a very strong company with a good reputation and a considerable track record of success in many large corporations and institutions. We were also highly impressed with their commitment to the University sector as evidenced by their decision to build a module to cover the management of student records – a vital process in Universities. The flexibility of the system and the ability to add on further modules in the future, made SAP the leading contender.

" City University was concerned to ensure that it had the resource capability to implement SAP R/3 and so wished to visit sites whose implementations, were particularly relevant to the university. Although SAP did not have any live university implementations at the time (they now have several), visits to existing customers Mercedes-Benz and Dalepak confirmed the suitability of the SAP solution and the quality of support from the company. In Autumn 1997, City University approved the selection team's recommendation to invest in an SAP R/3 solution. The system was to be implemented on a phased basis.

Getting it Right

In December 1997, the City University SAP implementation began, with an anticipated go-live date of August 1998. Consulting group, Diagonal, had been selected to provide the implementation expertise, but the University

was also determined that its own staff would be able to run the system without outside help, once the solution had gone live.

Frank Toop explains: " The aim was to learn from Diagonal and put ourselves in a position to be able to resolve any post-implementation problems internally, should they arise." For the implementation stage, City University established a project team of seven comprising two IT staff, four from the finance department and one School accountant. Despite the occasional difficult moment, Diagonal took on the extra configuration and ensured that the go-live date remained on schedule.

Seeing the Benefits

Since the go-live last year, City University has begun to see the benefits of the SAP solution. There are now just over 100 users on the system, from both outside and inside the finance department. This will shortly expand to 200.

Financial information can now be held centrally and accessed when needed and the previous duplication of information and paperwork has been reduced enhancing the process of financial analysis and reporting. Steve Grant, SAP Education Industry Manager, explained: " Staff in Schools and Departments now monitor their budgets on screen and also download financial data in order to produce reports. Improved monthly financial monitoring across the University allows much greater control and the ability to react more quickly"

Future Plans

The next stage for City University is to extend the SAP functionality to include procurement. Historically, purchasing had been made on an ad-hoc

basis and there had been no overall control of the purchasing process. Recognising that significant efficiency savings could be made through a more integrated purchasing strategy, the University is aiming to develop a central procurement capability and has consequently appointed a purchasing manager. The SAP solution would provide a far more integrated purchasing framework and a greater degree of visibility, allowing the manager to identify potential areas where savings could be made.

Human resources and payroll are likely to be the next areas to benefit from a SAP solution. The University is also considering the use of E-commerce. In the longer term the implementation of Campus Management – the new student records module will be evaluated.

Creating the next generation

As well as implementing SAP internally, City University is also one of the first institutions to offer access to SAP R/3 within a degree course. The School of Informatics offers degree students the chance to gain valuable skills in ERPs and SAP. The University is currently supporting a PhD student who is researching the effects of different industry and national cultures on SAP implementations.

Dr Neil Maiden, senior lecturer at the School of Informatics, is enthusiastic about the developments: " The academic courses on ERP at the University further underline the significance of the technology as an important business tool. I'm pleased to be involved with developing our students' knowledge of ERP methodologies."

Conclusions

Steve Grant of SAP sums up, " We at SAP are committed to the education sector and we're delighted to add City University to our growing list of successful projects. City University is a good example of how clear planning, careful selection, a little investment and the right partnerships can combine to ensure the successful implementation of a new system. We strive to ensure that the rewards and benefits are reaped as quickly as possible for our customers and the City University project is proof that we can achieve this."