

FUTURE PROOFING THE UNIVERSITY FOR THE DIGITAL AGE WITH SAP S/4HANA



We opted for an SAP S/4HANA system conversion approach as we felt it reduced implementation risk and cost enabling the University to tackle digital transformation by line of business on a priority basis.

Alan Cecchini, SAP Architect, Newcastle University



Challenges

- Devising a digital transformation strategy and implementation sequence
- Complicated system landscape which would benefit from simplification
- Hardware and software solutions approaching end of life
- COVID-19 impacting on planned initiatives



Benefits

- Delivery of a digital platform and integrated suite of SAP applications that will help the University to adapt and evolve into an 'intelligent enterprise'
- An SAP platform capable of driving superior student and faculty engagements
- A harmonised SAP user experience across transactions and Fiori apps
- A simplified SAP landscape leading to reduced cost of operations and smoother change management



Solutions

- SAP S/4HANA 1709
- SAP SuccessFactors Recruiting
- SAP CRM 7.0 (due to be replaced by new CRM technology platform)
- SAP SRM 7.0 (due to be replaced by S/4)



Why NTT DATA Business Solutions?

- Key focus on innovation in higher education
- Strategic SAP partner, providing application management services, technical and functional consulting, advisory services, and software maintenance
- Advisor on SAP S/4HANA journey



Industry: Higher Education

Products: A member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities in the UK

Students: 27,988 (2020/21)

Employees: 6,409 (2020)

Website: www.ncl.ac.uk

Future Proofing the University for the Digital Age

Continuing to invest and innovate with SAP technology, Newcastle University went live with SAP over 20 years ago starting initially with Finance, HR and Payroll modules. Next, they opted to become a pilot customer for Student Lifecycle Management, which is the industry solution for Higher Education. Since then, the University has undertaken many business transformation projects as they continue on their journey to becoming an intelligent enterprise. Consequently, the University's SAP footprint has grown significantly. Before implementing SAP S/4HANA, Newcastle undertook a number of maintenance projects to prepare for their S/4HANA journey. It was important that they managed the complexity of their intelligent journey by phasing the transformation. Significant projects of note included; Unicode conversions on their SAP databases, NetWeaver technical hub systems upgraded to the latest 7.5 versions and migration to Suite on HANA, which underpinned all their SAP systems to HANA.

After completing these projects, S/4HANA was a natural extension to their prior work albeit at a much larger scale. The University thought carefully about their roadmap and carried out detailed research including input from NTT DATA Business Solutions in the form of workshops and webinars, which Newcastle found very informative in planning their journey.

Choosing the Right Path

Moving from SAP ERP 6.0 to S/4HANA, the University opted for a system conversion path. Alan Cecchini, SAP Architect, Newcastle University, explained, "While starting afresh with a greenfield approach would have been nice, if we didn't have any constraints on time, budget or resource; the reality was a brownfield conversion was the best fit for the University's needs."

Newcastle decided to take a phased approach and deployed on-premise as opposed to a cloud deployment. Alan Cecchini revealed, "I recall having a conversation with Andy Steer at NTT DATA Business Solutions and Andy using the analogy of moving to S/4HANA is like buying a new car. You can pay outright to get the car in a one-step move; likewise, you can opt to take a one-step greenfield implementation of S/4HANA. Or you can systematically replace the component parts, for example thinking of the engine as HANA and the user interface (that is the windows) as Fiori apps. That approach resonated with us to manage the cost and risk."

Lessons Learned

Despite the size of the task, the business impact of moving to S/4HANA proved less arduous than anticipated due to project planning. This was a conscious decision undertaken by the University. They decided from the outset that phase 1 of their S/4HANA project would focus purely on converting from ERP to S/4HANA to get the technical foundations in. There was still so much to contend with given the various simplification items but by containing the scope, they could maximise the likelihood of success.

Their phased approach proved to be beneficial. Both from a roadmap perspective, by focusing on the technical conversion first before the business process transformation, but also from a project perspective as Newcastle undertook many trial conversions and the learnings ensured the University could determine a solid cutover strategy. They also had a strong internal team that had intricate knowledge and experience of their systems and processes, both from IT and from the business units; and 'governance-wise' they had the right level of support with University executive sponsorship and routes into SAP to escalate when required to resolve issues.

The Future

The University went live with S/4HANA in January 2020. The original intention was to roll straight into phase 2 (business transformation phase) and prioritise the first functional area to be transformed. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University had to pause and pivot to new challenges.

Follow on projects to upgrade S/4HANA to the latest release and collapsing Gateway into S/4HANA have successfully passed proof of concept assessment and are currently in the planning stages for rollout through the landscape.

Want to know more?
Do not hesitate to contact us:
www.nttdata-solutions.com

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