

Britehouse's first public sector project: City of Tshwane upgrade and 7.5 terabyte database

In a large and complex project that included moving one of the country's largest MS SQL Database (housing 7.5 terabytes of data) to a Data Centre – and new hardware – as well as upgrading a highly customised SAP 4.7 version to ECC6, Britehouse successfully brought this important public sector project, the City of Tshwane, in on time (March 2011) and budget with no disruption to users.

Although the City's SAP solution was ageing out of support, the City's primary objectives for the upgrade were to deploy new functionality and more effectively integrate existing SAP functionality to better support business processes. The City's intention is to offer improved services to its residents based on international best practice and proven solutions.

"SAP has done a lot of development in the public services market to align its solution offering with the South African environment and requirements," says City of Tshwane director of ICT Governance, Norms & Standards Management, Henk Brink. "We wanted, therefore, to be able to exploit SAP solutions for strategic public sector objectives such as e-Services, CRM and Service Management, and Web enabled offerings – to provide citizens with the means to, for instance, perform self service through the Web from the comfort of their homes. Our goal always is to eliminate frustration for the citizen while continuously speeding up service".

"In that context, the upgrade project was also aimed at enabling the City to expand on its Business Intelligence (BI) goals through the deployment of SAP BI products – providing management and other decision makers with relevant information faster."

The project would not be just another upgrade, however, because, over the years, the City has incorporated a number of additional municipalities into the Metro and has customised its original SAP implementation extensively. The City is also growing extremely rapidly.

"At 7.5 terabytes, the City's database is the biggest I've worked on in fifteen years of experience of large enterprises," says Britehouse Operations Executive, Henk Jordaan. "So, moving the existing system onto new hardware the City had acquired, but also moved the hardware to new premises in Centurion, should have been a daunting challenge".

"Britehouse has proved its upgrade methodology across many implementations and many industry sectors, and it worked just as effectively for the City."

Britehouse's first step was to analyse the City's existing SAP landscape and ensure that both the standard and customised elements of the system were fully understood and mapped before they were moved, and that the full scope of the project was known and effectively planned in detail beforehand.

"Britehouse used a tool from our partners, Panaya, to identify SAP Programs and specialized developments that would be problematic when migrating to the new environment. This created a solid platform for the project team to plan and address these problematic areas.," says Britehouse project manager, Deon du Preez.

"Panaya is a control mechanism that is used throughout the lifecycle of the project, identifying potential problematic programs and providing code fixes for these programs. This process reduced

process and project risk by dictating and managing test cycles, cutting the need for internal resources by up to 35%, and creating an ideal knowledge transfer vehicle”.

“Using solid Database and SAP Basis skills Britehouse reconnected some 4 500 users over the weekend of the data centre move, re-established data recoveries in the process, and switched Users back onto the system on Monday morning, without any problems.”

The data centre was moved on 18th February 2011, the upgrade was completed and the system was live on 24th March, again without any user disruption.

“The City of Tshwane chose Britehouse as its upgrade partner following a rigorous tender process that focused on pricing and capability, but their real value to us proved to be the extremely strong skills in the SAP technical environment. This was also evident in the areas of Project Management and functional consulting, where clear guidance to the City, backed up by extensive planning ensured that our environment was properly prepared for the upgrade” says Brink.

The 40-strong project team included members of the City of Tshwane’s Centre of Excellence, ensuring full continuity of knowledge of the new system once Britehouse had handed the operational system back to the City.

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