THE LARGEST SAP IS-U IMPLEMENTATION IN THE WORLD THIS YEAR!

We all know that any large-scale transformation is challenging.

But when you're implementing a technology-enabled transformation, in an organisation owned by its customers, operating the world's largest single marketplace in a heavily regulated industry, serving 24 million consumers, then 'challenging' becomes the new norm.

Welcome to Steve Adcock's world. Chief Information Officer at Xoserve and Executive sponsor for the largest SAP IS-U implementation in the world this year.

Steve took time to tell us about the three-year programme, how it will underpin the ongoing transformation of the UK gas market and how Project One helped him to pull it all together.

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THE CHALLENGE

Steve began by setting out the context for the programme:

"We are a 350-person business, but the market we serve is huge. The systems we operate and the change activities we deliver are completely out of kilter with the scale of business because of the role that we play in the marketplace. As you probably know, the gas market has been competitive since 1996, with business and then domestic competition being introduced. The UK Link platform we are replacing was put in-place in 1996 to enable this competitive gas market.

UK Link served us well for 20 years, but in that period our marketplace has changed significantly. In 1996 there was one gas transporter in the UK and probably a handful of energy suppliers. Today gas distribution is managed through a range of different companies - about 45-50 participants - so it is quite a complex marketplace, highly regulated. One of our first exercises was to ask, OK we know what the platform does today, what does the industry want from this platform in the next five to ten years?"

Meaningful engagement with the industry was vital. As the Central Data Service provider for Britain's gas market, Xoserve is owned by the industry it serves. The new UK Link solution had to be fit to serve the market's view of its current and future needs; fit to handle future settlement technologies and processes; fit to enable even easier supplier switching for consumers and fit for smart meters and smart energy balancing. The programme undertook what Steve describes as "a huge consultation exercise." The solution that was being built and deployed by Xoserve would have to be used by these 45 participants, who would also have to change their systems."

THE APPROACH

The programme moved into its design, build and implementation phase in March 2014.

Steve and his teams identified major risks, "there was probably a political and regulatory motivated drive for early delivery, that felt extremely risky. So, the project set out with a timeline that felt very difficult to achieve. Consequently, we hit issues and couldn't achieve the timescale."

In late summer of 2015, the decision was taken to reschedule the go-live, replan the programme and replace the Programme Director. Steve recalls that they were difficult times, "we were probably at quite a low. I had made the decision to change the Programme Director and Project One was recommended to me. It was a very difficult period. I would say it was probably one of the lowest points in terms of the confidence in our teams. There was a lot of negativity around the programme, just because people felt disappointed. What I needed was someone who was very people oriented to come in and start to bring the team back together again, build the confidence and morale."

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WHAT HAS PROJECT ONE CONTRIBUTED?

DRIVE & COMMITMENT

Steve says the Project One team he brought in has made a difference, "managing through the tough times, putting the commitment in. I have got a direct workforce here that has been putting in an awful lot of time and effort in order to drive this programme through. It is important that they see third parties with the same commitment. So, there is a building of respect, and I think certainly we see that from Project One people."

Engaging with the industry has certainly been key, "a lot of time is spent on the external engagement and industry forums, providing the assurance and credibility that we are going in the right direction."

Bringing the industry along with the programme has been important but there have been many other challenges too. Steve recalls that, "data migration and market testing were two really big challenges."

"Getting the industry to a point where they all agreed it was ready and we could go live required cut-over plans for Xoserve and every one of the 45-participant companies. A big exercise in industry readiness."

In readiness for go-live, a 23-day cut-over period was necessitated by the sheer volume of data to be migrated. With £4 billion of turnover at stake in the industry, the team ran four dress rehearsals before completing the cut-over to the new system. Steve says, "it is referred to as a big bang. We hope it is not a big bang. Certainly not in a gas context!"

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>
> **Steve Adcock, Chief Information Officer at Xoserve**

THE OUTCOME

"IT IS ABOUT BRINGING IN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO ADD TO YOUR OWN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE."

After a successful go-live at the beginning of June, Steve is able to look back on the programme and reflect on his team; "The thing I am most proud of is the way our people have worked and committed, and shown resilience to drive through what has been a very long programme," and on the Project One team, "it is about bringing in knowledge and experience to add to your own knowledge and experience.

Through passing that knowledge and experience on, our people are richer at the end than they were at the start. With the knowledge and experience that the Project One team has, it is important that they don't just come and only do a job but they help to enrich the ability of Xoserve and its people."

OUR CLIENTS KNOW THAT REAL CHANGE DOES MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE

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