

Euro conversion project 2001

As a testament to the quality of work that Whitehouse completed for Arjo Wiggins Peter Bradford said, "We are expecting a long term relationship with Whitehouse. We expect to be largely self sufficient as we have a very experienced and proficient IT department, but there are always cases when we need some very specialised knowledge. This is a proven quality in Whitehouse Consultants and one that I expect to call on in the future."

On January 1st 2002 the euro was introduced as legal tender in the 12 Eurozone countries. The introduction of this new currency demanded that all businesses within the EU trade and record all financial transactions in euros.

A primary concern for Arjo Wiggins was that euro conversions were uncharted territory and therefore it had no reference sites to learn from or experienced euro conversion consultants to call on. Peter Bradford, IS Director, Arjo Wiggins reported, "We were cautious in our approach to converting our Italian and German systems. We needed the additional comfort of having on-hand JD Edwards experts. Whitehouse Consultants provided us with a project team that had excellent solution knowledge and worked with us to identify and solve problems. We have previously worked with Whitehouse and I was confident that they would get a good result."

Both the German and Italian sites had only been running for a couple of years and, in contrast to other Arjo Wiggins sites, had few employees and completed a low number of transactions. The age of these systems therefore influenced the decision that all the data contained on these systems would be converted into euros, as opposed to partial conversion.

EnterpriseOne* financial and distribution modules were running on both systems. To complete the conversion Arjo Wiggins faced the option of using the JD Edwards standard methodology, utilising either Whitehouse's consultants or its own in-house team. It did explore the viability of completing the conversion independently, using an approach customised by Whitehouse's consultants; however by taking this route Arjo Wiggins would have lost the added benefit of JD Edwards second line support.

Whitehouse worked to a fixed deadline and with a small lead-time. The project had to be completed in just 3 months in time for E-Day (Euro Day). Arjo Wiggins was expecting issues to arise during the conversion work. As Peter Bradford explains, "We were surprised by the amount of problems we found. After encountering the first few and knowing that we would probably encounter more, we knew we needed people who were able to investigate problems. Whitehouse deployed qualified people to do the job, able to follow through a problem and come up with the solutions."

Whitehouse was able to draw upon its solution knowledge and expertise to provide a conversion strategy. A 'safe' environment was built into which Whitehouse put a copy of the real data. The first couple of months were spent planning and practising the conversion on this data. As financial consultant David Ridley described, "Using the safe environment meant we got as close as we could to re-enacting the actual conversion to see what was going to happen on the day. The actual 'cut-over' conversion only took a couple of days - it was the groundwork we did beforehand that guaranteed its success." Arjo Wiggins' euro-converted Italian and German systems went 'cutover' during November 2001, in plenty of time for the January 1st deadline.



ARJOWIGGINS

*EnterpriseOne was known at the time of the project as OneWorld

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