

A growing business needed robust software for visibility on a pan-european scale

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MWB Business Exchange, a division of leading commercial property developers, Marylebone Warwick Balfour plc, was formed in 1997. It is now Europe's second largest provider of serviced offices and workspace solutions across the continent. Annual turnover at the time of the project was £75 million with a 1500-strong client base and 500 staff.

Investment in the business had led to the acquisition of new sites across UK and mainland Europe. Business development on this scale needs the support of a robust software solution that allows visibility of the business on a pan-European basis. MWB Business Exchange realised that it had outgrown its accounting systems and needed greater management information, especially on the sales side. Following a tender process, Whitehouse Consultants, an accredited JD Edwards reseller was selected to provide and implement EnterpriseOne*, a comprehensive business solution that manages financial and operations processes.



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Mark Hughes, Commercial Director of MWB Business Exchange was involved with the project from the beginning. He described himself as someone with energy and the ability to put ideas into action. At times Hughes was working full time on the project and felt it was important that he be able to use the system at all levels. He reported this a useful investment of his time that had helped him to manage the period of training and handover.

One of the first aspects of the project to be completed was the live-running of the back office system, a straight-forward system change of a familiar process. Changing the front end required a greater degree of involvement, with processes and technology being the first areas to be addressed. At the process stage Hughes defined the business need - an activity that evolved pre and post software selection: "Process mapping and gap analysis ensured the software fitted the business and determined what extra was required." In addition to EnterpriseOne MWB Business Exchange selected a complementary CRM product.

"We found Whitehouse easy to communicate with and in touch with our sort of organisation."
Mark Hughes, Commercial Director, MWB Business Exchange.



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

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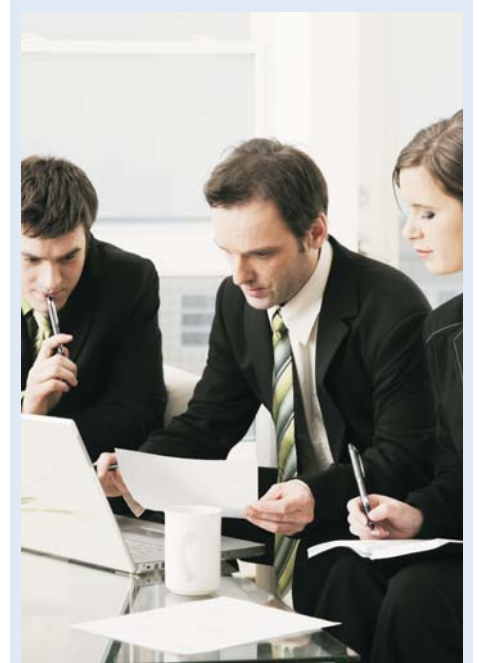
Case Study

EnterpriseOne

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For the pilot phase, Hughes selected a financially aware person at one site prior to commencing the roll-out phases. Despite the successful pilot, Hughes describes the initial user acceptance as a "fairly uncomfortable" experience. The system users (front desk, customer service personnel) were unfamiliar with accounting matters and it became apparent that a minimum level of financial acumen would aid usage and adoption of the new system so Hughes quickly engaged a financial trainer. The roll-out continued on a site by site basis using a few key users to transfer knowledge to the new end-users.

A goal of the implementation roll-out phase is for the customer to reach self sufficiency. MWB Business Exchange ensured it achieved this position as soon as possible. Despite it "feeling risky" at the time, Hughes considered MWB Business Exchange had adopted a good routine. Hughes reported evidence of having tightened procedures. Previous errors in the front-end accounting were picked up and debt management became much tighter. Bank reconciliations against AR happened. The company had a full overview of the business. Hughes reported that he'd had no qualms about buying the solution via a reseller organisation and stressed the benefits of ease of communication. As a reseller and implementation consultancy, Whitehouse received praise for the ability to offer customisation and a suitable array of complementary solutions. Hughes said, "Whitehouse is in touch with our sort of organisation and their Project Manager is both a very capable and personable individual."



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