

Capitalising on the Cloud

Implementing Oracle Human Capital Management with University of Greenwich... in 11 months.

The University of Greenwich is a University steeped in History. Having been established in 1890 and with three campuses, one of which incorporates a World Heritage Site and three buildings designed by Sir Christopher Wren, those outside of HE circles would be excused for assuming that Greenwich would be comfortable resting on its considerable laurels. However, those within HE, and certainly the 2,900 Greenwich staff and 40,000 Greenwich students will know that the University is forward thinking and ambitious.

The University places student experience at the heart of everything it does. From the multi-million pound Stockwell Street Building opened in 2014 to the recent multi-million pound renovation of the Dreadnought Student Hub building, the University has shown that the teaching and social experience of its students and staff is worth investing in.

Back in July 2019, the University applied that same philosophy of investing in staff experience by embarking on the implementation of a new Human Capital Management system. It is fitting that a University so associated with time (the Royal Observatory is on the doorstep) were able to achieve this in a record time – 7 months from contract to cutover of core HR and then a mere four months later to deliver Payroll as well.

The Key success factors were simple; a trusted implementation partner in Namos Solutions that shared the same values of professionalism and expertise, and a 'one team' approach to overcoming challenges together.

That is not to say that the journey was simple and did not encounter its fair share of challenges.

Starting the Journey

Like many organisations, The University of Greenwich had developed their existing HR Payroll system over a number of years. The existing system, 'Oracle E-Business Suite' had a wealth of data, a plethora of customisations and a host of dependent systems. However, unlike the maritime wonders that Greenwich is so associated with, this system had become a 'creaky ship' under the weight of that history.

The University really needed a complete HR solution, one that would provide a consistent intuitive user experience, one that would streamline and systemise to eliminate time-consuming manual processes and one that would increase insights into the workings of the University and its business

The University were faced with a quandary, sail on with a system that would only ever take them so far, or invest in a future proofed platform that would take them into the clouds. After deliberation and due diligence, the University chose the latter and after securing the services of Namos Solutions to implement Oracle HCM, they never looked back.

The benefits of the project were aligned to the mission of the University; to transform lives through inspired teaching and research. By migrating its current HR systems to Oracle HCM Cloud, the University was confident it would be able to transform processes and in doing so, inspire enhanced employee and student experience and empower its HR team.

One Team Approach

When Namos got onboard in July 2019, it was clear this would be an effective partnership. The University had 'buy in' from leadership that fully understood the benefits of the product.

That senior level 'buy in' came in the form of Gail Brindley, Director of HR, and Paul Butler, Director of Information & Library Services. Aside from offering the considerable skills and expertise of their staff, they fostered a 'no blame' culture and a steely resolve to simplify and optimise processes.



The result? An enfranchised project team where decisions were taken with autonomy and a 'long term' view.

Although the project team brought together in-house subject matter experts, new recruits and a host of Namos Consultants, the team all pulled together as one. Gail and Paul were on hand to chart a clear course, ensuring the team rowed in the same direction. When the project encountered issues, all hands were *on deck* intent on moving forwards.

The core values of the project team aligned to the core principles of Namos; Professionalism, Expertise and Trust. The team consisted of professionals that respected one another's considerable expertise and trusted one another to deliver.

Charting the Course

Even with bought in leadership, an enfranchised project team and the expertise of an award-winning solution implementer like Namos, nothing guarantees success like hard work!

Namos are experts in applying the industry best practise in Oracle solutions implementation (broadly following the 'Oracle Unified Methodology'), however, there is considerable work involved in implementing systems of this scale.

The *Initiate and Design* phase involved identifying every interface, mapping all the data from the source system, and aligning agreed requirements to configurable functionality.

What followed was a *Prototyping* phase, carefully walking through functionality and refining and aligning awareness of the requirements to capabilities of the product.

Only then did the team commit to *testing* functionality. It was at this stage that the professionalism of the team shone through, with the PM ensuring timely testing, the subject matter experts confidently accepting functionality and the expertise of the Namos consultants acting on defects in hours or days as opposed to weeks and months.

Intense data migration, integration, reporting and change management was a constant demand of every phase.

All of this meant that the core HR system was *deployed* into production for the start of February 2020, a mere 7 months after the contract sign. What followed was 4 months of meticulous parallel payroll runs reconciling to the penny, before going live with Payroll at the end of May 2020.

The Destination

Within only a few months *running* with Oracle HCM Cloud, the University of Greenwich has been able to bring together siloed business processes and ways of working into a single source of truth. The system is providing its employees with access to accurate and consistent information whenever and wherever they are.

In less than a year, the University has gone from uncertainty and anxiety regarding the future of its HR systems estate to pride and optimism of the future capabilities.

After the tireless efforts of the project team, the project sailed through 'Early Life Support', so much so, the system is already in stable operation supported by the Namos 'eNlighten' Managed Services Support team.

The Future

Buoyed by the success of their HCM and Payroll rollout, the University have now also gone live with Expenses and are in the final stages of their Time and Labour and Recruitment implementation.

Not content with implementing Core HR & Payroll, the University has recently partnered with Namos technical and HE domain experts to build an end-to-end staff HESA return. The solution promises to streamline what has

historically been a laborious data-collection exercise into a Cloud-Based PaaS solution capable of delivering a HESA return in clicks and days.

This continued investment is testament to the University's confidence in a Digital Strategy that will build system capabilities that provide the foundation for continued IT and University successes for years to come. From enduring siloed, disjointed systems and processes, to enjoying seamless effective system solutions.



Author:

Richard Clayton

Namos Higher Education Lead

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A Note from the Author:

After spending nearly all of my professional career in Higher Education holding business critical operational and senior roles, it was always going to take a special employer to convince me to leave. However, after hearing Gail speak at Oracle Open World Europe 2020, about 'one team' and 'partnership' it was then that I was certain Namos were my *right fit*.

I would like to thank the many contributors to this article for sharing their thoughts and insight.

LinkedIn: RSCLayton

Twitter: RichardSClayton



Contact:

Michelle Clelland, Marketing Manager
+44 7468 493 161