

Underpinning efficiency savings for Hoople and its customers



Hoople Ltd

As well as benefiting from the solution itself, Hoople provides services based on the Unit4 ERP solution to improve efficiency in back-office finance, procurement, human resources and payroll services for public sector customers, including Herefordshire Council and Rutland County Council.

The situation

Established in 2011, Hoople is a private limited company with public sector shareholders, namely Herefordshire Council and Wye Valley NHS Trust. It provides shared business support services to the public sector.

When the company was founded in 2011, shareholders wanted to address a number of challenges they were facing. Not least, in common with local authorities across the country, Herefordshire Council was facing increasing demands on services while simultaneously having to make millions of pounds worth of savings.

In creating the Shared Services Partnership (which later became Hoople Ltd) it was envisioned that certain services (for example payroll, HR and IT) could be shared by founding partners, in order to eliminate duplication of effort and deliver efficiency savings, thereby offering maximum value to taxpaying citizens.

The needs

In order to achieve its goal, the newly established Partnership was confronted by a number of complex issues. The partners provided a diverse range of services, supported by many disparate systems. Data was often difficult to locate and applications were expensive to maintain. As the public sector continued to adapt and change, expensive IT systems often failed to provide the flexibility needed, without the employment of expensive contractors.

A need for a single ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution to underpin all operations was identified. The system would need to be highly flexible to cope not just with existing partner requirements, but also to address future need as new public sector partner organisations were on-boarded.

Sector/Industry

Public Sector (Shared Services)

Size

300 employees

Location

UK

Product

Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)



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Mark Pearson

Business and Corporate Applications Manager at Hoople.

Once the need was identified, Hoople embarked upon a competitive tendering process, inviting ERP vendors to apply and be assessed against a number of key criteria.

The solution

Following a meticulous examination of all submissions, a selection panel comprising representatives from the Shared Services Partnership Board, Procurement, Project and IT teams unanimously selected Unit4 ERP for its Finance, Human Resources and Payroll capabilities. The panel concluded that Unit4 was the best solution for its needs, based on the company's local government experience, combined with its adaptable technology platform. It was considered that Unit4 would provide all the functionality that the Shared Services Partnership required, with significantly lower initial implementation and ongoing costs of ownership than the other companies that tendered. With support from Unit4, Hoople has now implemented Unit4 ERP to support over 4,000 employees within its own teams at Hoople, at Herefordshire County Council and other external customers including Rutland County Council and Halo Leisure.

The benefits

The implementation of Unit4 ERP has underpinned significant operational transformation for Hoople staff, shareholders and external public sector customers, helping them to adapt to funding restrictions – increasing efficiency and maximising resources.

Hoople's internal Unit4 ERP team utilises an in-house developed “out-of-the-box” template. This encompasses good practice processes to allow implementation of a full ERP capability (covering finance, procurement, HR, and payroll) for new customers, typically within six months. As an important and integral part of the on-boarding process, Hoople uses training workshops for new customers, so that the value of the system can be quickly realised.

“It's very important for new customers to achieve rapid return on investment,” says Mark Pearson, Business and Corporate Applications Manager at Hoople. “This can be achieved with the built-for-sector template, a flexible

system and the right support. The flexibility of Unit4 Business World [Unit4 ERP] is a significant benefit. Our internal support team and business users can configure it to adapt rapidly to changing strategy, without having to call upon expensive contractors.

“This was brought into sharp focus recently when Hoople upgraded all customers to the latest version, while at the same time onboarding a new Council. This was successfully managed by the internal team.”

As well as reductions to system costs, employees and customers of Unit4 ERP can be supported by a modern ERP system that fosters new ways of working. Workflow via any device, automatically and electronically directs the right information at the right time, to the right people, meaning swift and easy processing for example of requests for requisitions and annual leave approval. Additionally, employees can considerably reduce the amount of time they spend searching for information and filling out forms.

Through Unit4 ERP, Hoople can offer many benefits to public sector companies. Self-service functionality means that reports that would previously have taken days to compile can now be achieved at the touch of a button. Decisions can be made more quickly and on the basis of accurate and readily available data. Unit4 ERP “...is now seen as a key enabler to support business processes,” says Mark Pearson, “The improved visibility, workflow, flexibility, time and costs savings mean that our customers are ideally placed to meet the challenges they face today and in the future.”

Future opportunities

There is the potential for greater efficiency savings and economies of scale to be achieved if more organisations can be on-boarded. With the support of Unit4, Hoople is actively pursuing a strategy to offer the services to other public sector organisations. “Customers have the potential to receive a market leading, agile ERP system, implemented by a proven public sector delivery partner,” says Mark Pearson.