

Case Study:

Strong partnership with HPE underpins major SAP HANA deployment at BCX



This case study is an overview of a completed SAP HANA project at BCX, carried out by BCX, in conjunction with HPE South Africa, to address numerous performance issues that BCX was experiencing with its warehousing management system as a result of an exponential growth in data volumes. The project was successfully completed over a four-month period and serves as an example of the strong partnership and joint capabilities of BCX and HPE to carry out this type of deployment. The success of the project was largely shaped by BCX's ability to provide a full range of SAP services, which are supported by SAP through SAP's Partner Programme. BCX is certified at the highest partner level, that of SAP Service Alliance Partner.



THE CHALLENGE

In December 2017, BCX experienced issues with its existing SAP warehousing management system, which would not perform efficiently and was experiencing long runtimes for processes, resulting in the business not being able to meet reporting deadlines.

An analysis of the problem was conducted in January 2018, to identify the root cause of the issue. It was subsequently found that data volumes entering the system had increased exponentially (by 2 400 times), to a point where the current warehousing system was unable to process the data fast enough. This was despite BCX ensuring over the preceding years that spare capacity was available and was provisioned for at the expected data growth rate. However, the unexpected surge in data volumes was found to be as a result of a new business unit entering the organisation.

The business risked finance-related reputational damage, as it was unable to meet reporting deadlines due to the long runtimes and length of time it took for the warehousing system to process data. There was also a need to improve processes within the warehousing system and to shorten data update cycles.



THE SOLUTION

In response to the problem, BCX's IT division launched a pilot project that entailed deploying the SAP Business Warehouse Powered by SAP HANA solution. The pilot proved to be a success, a business case was presented, and approval was given for the project to proceed.

HPE SA, with whom BCX had had a longstanding relationship, was selected as the hardware vendor for the project and supplied the HANA appliance – as SAP Business Warehouse HANA system – that was pre-configured and tailored to BCX's environment. BCX migrated its database onto the system, and the system was upgraded to the latest version to ensure proper support from SAP and that it operated within the guidelines of recommended database versions, operating systems and application systems.

HPE SA was chosen as the implementation partner for this project, as this allowed both parties to leverage the relationship between BCX and HPE from a partner perspective. BCX was already using HPE hardware and software. HPE provided first proof of concept in 2012 and provided a demo system for BCX to use.

As a precursor to the project, the two companies had been engaging for a number of years regarding different strategies and deployment options for a SAP appliance - a dedicated SAP HANA system. This meant that the project planning was refined over the years and updated to remain current with BCX's requirements and in terms of the processes that would be followed with database migration and upgrade.

The timeline for the project from business case sign-off to go-live with the hardware was from 1 February 2019 to 20 May 2019 (four months) – which is considerably shorter than a typical deployment of this kind.

The four-month timeframe was achieved through extreme preparation and planning, with information gathered from two proof of concepts that were performed to validate the various processes and procedures that would be required when executing a database migration and upgrade.

This also delivered real business value for BCX, as a significant amount of the configuration of the SAP load integration set up and certification was already completed by HPE at factory level. Having the equipment correctly configured meant that it could be installed and go into production immediately.



THE RESULT

The successful implementation of the SAP Business Warehouse Powered by SAP HANA yielded a number of business benefits for BCX. The daily update process runtime was reduced from 3.5 hours to 1.5 hours, more than twice the speed of the previous system.

BCX's budget and forecast cycle processes dropped from a six-hour window to a one-hour window by reducing the runtime of the processes from 2.5 hours (best case) to two minutes, through redesigned data models, as well as optimised code and processes.

Certain processes, which were only running once a day, are now running hourly, improving the finance department's ability to meet reporting deadlines and resulting in a runtime of two minutes.

Performance issues with SAP Business Planning and Consolidation (BPC) were resolved, and instead of only loading summarised data, as was the case previously, line item level of detail data is now loaded.



QUOTES:

"BCX's migration onto the new system was a resounding success. We had very few issues during the implementation process and the biggest advantage was the joint planning and preparation with HPE SA. Having a partner that not only provided us with hardware optimised for the SAP Business Warehouse powered by SAP HANA, but also one that could provide the crucial implementation service underpinned the success of the project."

- Derek Fox, SAP Principal Consultant at BCX

"SAP solutions are geared to run the entire business and as such, the impact of these implementations are significant. Our collaboration and partnership with SAP were instrumental in enabling us to reduce the project time frame from a year down to three months. The benefit to BCX is that the budget saved can be allocated to other aspects of the business."

- Riaz Patel, Value Sales Specialist at HPE SA