

Case Study: Marriott International

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Karim Rasched, Director of Shared Services, Europe, Marriott Hotels International

In Brief

Challenge

Following its sale by Whitbread plc, Marriott UK had just 12 months to create a separate IT infrastructure and new HR and payroll systems.

Solution

Symatrix was brought in by Marriott's global HR outsourcing partner, Aon Hewitt. Symatrix implemented a “99% vanilla” version of Oracle's leading HCM in the form of SIMPLY HCM.

This Symatrix solution met all of Marriott's needs, reduced risk and offered maximum flexibility for the future.

Conclusion

“Symatrix was instrumental in helping Marriott UK meet arguably the most critical business deadline it had ever faced,” says Karim Rasched, Director of Shared Services, Europe, Marriott Hotels International.

About the client

Marriott International, Inc. is a leading worldwide hospitality company. Its heritage can be traced to a soft-drink stand opened in Washington DC in 1927 by J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott.



Today, the company has nearly 3,700 properties and 17 brands in 73 countries and territories worldwide. In the UK there are approximately 10,000 employees working at 56 Marriott venues, including 10 Hotel & Country Clubs

Marriott is proud of its heritage which, it says, “opens doors of opportunity for guests, owners and franchisees, and associates.”

Marriott is consistently recognised as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies. The business is grounded in five core values: “put people first, pursue excellence, embrace change, act with integrity and serve our world.”



Rapid, pre-configured HR and Payroll for Marriott UK, to meet an immovable business deadline

Challenge

In recent years in the UK, the Marriott business had been a wholly owned subsidiary of Whitbread plc operating under a franchise agreement with Marriott International. However, in 2005, Whitbread decided to sell the franchised part of the business and purely focus on its own brands.

Business transition and separation

As a consequence, Marriott in the UK had to separate its IT infrastructure from the parent company, as it was no longer able to share the financial systems it had access to when part of Whitbread.

The clock was ticking, as Karim Rasched, Director of Shared Services, Europe at Marriott Hotels International, explains:

“We had a one-year transitional services agreement with Whitbread, so at the end of 12 months Marriott UK had to be completely separate,” says Rasched.

“There was a huge task ahead of us: we had to plan the separation, rebuild the IT infrastructure, and launch new HR and payroll applications among others,” continues Rasched.

10,000 employees coming on board

“We also had to hire the technical and business staff needed to run everything. And at changeover we had to be sure we could immediately pay about 10,000 Marriott UK

employees who had previously been Whitbread employees.”

Although faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge, Marriott UK was able to draw on recent experience. In a strange twist of fate, Whitbread had announced the Marriott sell-off in the same week that Marriott UK had completed a new implementation of Oracle E-Business Suite 11i for supply chain, finance, HR and payroll. Rasched had led that project in his then role as Marriott’s Business Change Manager.

“We had learned some very valuable lessons,” recalls Rasched.

Rasched was confident that Oracle E-Business Suite could provide the scalable, cost-effective HR and payroll platform that the ‘new Marriott’ in the UK needed. What he didn’t know, at this stage, was how he could implement the infrastructure, the processes, and the system build and rollout in the time he had available.

A consequence of the sell-off was that Marriott UK had to separate its IT infrastructure from Whitbread and would no longer be able to access its financial systems.



Solution

In view of the tight timeframe, Rasched turned to Aon Hewitt (a global business process outsourcing partner of Marriott International) for help with the transition.

By contracting with Aon Hewitt, Marriott UK had rapid access to all the expertise it needed to put the systems in place and, thereafter, to run its business processes.

Guided by Aon Hewitt, Marriott’s governance group made a quick decision on system vendor, implementer and infrastructure.

“Based on a recommendation by Aon Hewitt, we chose to go with Oracle E-Business Suite for HR and payroll, and to use Oracle On Demand (a service delivered by Oracle’s data centre in Austin, Texas) for infrastructure, hosting and management of the programs,” says Rasched.

The benefit of hindsight

“We were in a unique position. We could capitalise on the E-Business Suite work we had just completed within the Whitbread group - and we also had the benefit of hindsight. We were able to say, ‘that bit didn’t work out, so this time let’s do it like this’.”

“Crucially, Aon Hewitt brought in Symatrix, an Oracle Platinum Partner. The Symatrix team were positioned as the absolute experts in implementing Oracle HR and payroll quickly and reliably, without time-consuming customisations - and so it proved,” explains Rasched.

Also, Symatrix had not been involved in the Whitbread E-Business Suite HR and Payroll implementation, so was able to bring a fresh, Marriott-focused perspective to the project.



“Symatrix had a ready-made HR and payroll solution for companies of our size, complete with pre-configured best practice processes and templates. Moreover, the Symatrix support centre in Manchester offered a team of experienced HR and payroll professionals that we could turn to for guidance and advice whenever we needed it,” continues Rasched.

A simple way forward

Symatrix’ ready-to-go Oracle-based HR and payroll system has since come to be known as SIMPLY HCM (Human Capital Management) - a model that has now been adopted by numerous organisations of up to 15,000 employees.

“Getting Symatrix involved certainly made things easier for us at a very challenging time,” confirms Rasched.

“Symatrix showed us the way forward, enabling us to build the system without necessarily knowing the precise business requirements.”



Conclusion

According to Rasched: “We wanted our new HR and payroll system to be as ‘vanilla’ as possible to save time, complexity and cost. And that’s what Symatrix’ delivered for us: a 99% vanilla version of the best-in-class Oracle HCM, with virtually no customisation required.

“Yet the system meets the exact needs of Marriott UK. It gives us fast, easy access to a single merged HR and payroll database, it runs a complex payroll, and it gives us maximum flexibility and scalability to meet new requirements,” he adds.

Expertise that reduces risk

“Symatrix delivered all of this and helped shape our thinking. Paul Gillott, Managing Director at Symatrix, was part of our governance group, and he brought in specific Symatrix specialists - experts in payroll, pensions, interfaces, reporting and so forth - at the appropriate point. Overall, Symatrix simplified what was a complex, high-risk project.”

From a global perspective, the system also interfaces with Marriott’s general ledger while providing a model that may be suitable for implementations elsewhere.

Rasched is delighted with the outcome:

“Symatrix was instrumental in helping Marriott UK meet arguably the most critical business deadline it had ever faced. As a result, we now have improved cost

transparency, and improved HR processes and efficiencies.

Cost reductions and satisfied users

“In payroll specifically, the system Symatrix implemented for us has reduced costs and improved processing times and user satisfaction. In our twice-yearly user surveys our new payroll system and processes now consistently score well above 90% overall satisfaction from a diverse group of users.”

Individual hotels have also been able to reduce costs. Using an outsourced model eliminates the need for functional specialists at each site, and cost savings will continue as Marriott UK rolls out the Symatrix-implemented system to more users.

A measure of Marriott UK’s satisfaction with the system, outsourcing solution and longevity of the relationship is that, recently, it entered into a new agreement with Aon Hewitt, with Symatrix retained as the technical and implementation partner.

“The team here at Marriott hit it off with Symatrix from day one, and Symatrix continue to make an important contribution to our business. We wanted to be sure that Symatrix’ services would continue to be part of the very strong package delivered by Aon Hewitt,” concludes Rasched.

“Symatrix was very good at helping me drive the project through. There are countless examples of Symatrix introducing pragmatic solutions and best practice that contributed to the project’s success.”

Karim Rasched,
Director of Shared
Services, Europe,
Marriott Hotels
International

About Symatrix

Symatrix is a specialist in technology and outsourcing for HR and Payroll.

Our team of highly experienced HR practitioners can implement the full lifecycle of your HR and payroll needs - from best practice HR templates to the full support of your HR and payroll department as a managed service.

Our out-of-the-box HCM solutions can be implemented quickly, cost effectively and flexibly. We can design and deploy, we can manage the service for you or alongside you, and we can also provide consultancy on how to get the best out of your existing investment in HR systems.

Symatrix solutions blend the technology, expertise and best practice processes

needed to help you attract and retain key people, drive growth and generate increased profit from your most valuable and costly resource: your own people.

These solutions are built on our reputation for quality, integrity and the value delivered to our clients. A powerful combination of our HR expertise, technical competence, flexibility and responsiveness has enabled us to forge successful working relationships and partnerships with world-class organisations of all sizes.

Symatrix is an award-winning Oracle Platinum Partner (the highest level of partner accreditation), and has twice been named Oracle Applications Partner of the Year.

Our full range of technology and outsourcing solutions for HR and payroll



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