"Our SAP modernization program is really going to transform the culture of Bell."

– Diane Schwarz, director of IT for Bell Helicopter[1]

Flying high: Bell Helicopter improves responsiveness without business disruption during major SAP upgrade.

Is it possible to engage in a major SAP modernization program without impacting daily business demands? Bell Helicopter found that, with the right resources and approach, the answer is, "Yes!".

Diane Schwarz knows what it's like to push the envelope. When tasked to modernize Bell Helicopter's SAP platform, she didn't hesitate to recommend an approach that was initially viewed as risky.

As director of IT for the renowned commercial and military helicopter manufacturer, Schwarz needed to determine the most effective way to upgrade from the company's platform to SAP 6.0. The migration would span Bell and Textron Defense Systems — both business units of Textron, Inc. More specifically, the move would impact large groups of users who were located in at least six geographic sites across two countries and worked during different time zones.

"There was no natural central location to run this project, and we wanted to optimize resources and keep it as low cost as possible," explains Schwarz. After assessing various options, the IT team decided they would employ a virtual model as it would enable staff to perform the related work remotely from their respective sites and offices.

"Everybody thought we were a little nuts to consider running an upgrade project 100 percent virtual, but since it was divided 50/50 between our business units, the choice made perfect sense to us," says Schwarz.

According to Schwarz, she had a good reason to be confident in this decision.

The Project Takes Flight

Bell supported its IT operations through a combination of internal staff and external service providers. As the person responsible for the company's SAP Application Solution Center, among other IT functions, Schwarz had long relied on Deloitte Application Managed Services (AMS) to oversee the company's SAP portfolio.

In addition, Bell IT had previously engaged Deloitte AMS to help the company with its virtual rollout of an SAP finance module at the company's Singapore facility. Given the potential risks involved in the more widespread SAP 6.0 upgrade, the IT team needed a

Impacts from transformation:

- SAP 6.0 upgrade completed on time and within budget
- Zero business disruptions through a seamless transition to the new platform
- Greater flexibility and responsiveness through a widely deployed, modern SAP infrastructure
- A best-practice model for future modernization efforts

[1]At the time of the interview, Diane Schwarz was the director of IT for Bell Helicopter. Presently she is the CIO of Textron.

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collaborator with strong resources who understood Bell's business and was experienced in virtual implementations. They immediately turned to Deloitte.

"We needed to keep our SAP operations intact during this large-scale implementation. Deloitte AMS knew our SAP operations, data, and users. They also regularly work remotely with other clients— so it was a much less risky proposition," says Schwarz. This was important because Schwarz would be redeploying 50 percent of her staff to work on the project and needed to avoid undue IT risks during that time.

Moreover, having access to knowledgeable Deloitte AMS staff and other Deloitte resources was critical since Schwarz could not commit the specific skills of individuals, such as a WM configurator or ABAP programmer, for an extended period of time. "I needed to be able to flex the skill sets when I had new projects coming down the pipeline, rather than just having a defined resource that was there supporting my facility," adds Schwarz.

With Schwarz's go-ahead, Deloitte led a joint project team of nearly 50 people during the virtual implementation process. Working together, they deployed SAP 6.0 across multiple locations at the same time to 4,000 users, including those in Bell's Fort Worth, Texas headquarters and its Mirabel, Canada facility.

A Quiet Ride

Bell and Deloitte completed the SAP upgrade as planned. "It was one of those quiet go-lives, where you didn't have any escalations because nothing was broken," says Schwarz. "It worked great."

As a result, Bell ultimately enhanced and transformed its SAP operations through a new, more agile business model, achieving key project goals:

- Performed a 100 percent virtual SAP 6.0 implementation
- Accomplished a seamless upgrade for thousands of SAP users in two countries on time and within budget
- Transitioned from a traditional module-by-module implementation method for SAP to a large-scale virtual approach enabling many SAP modules to be simultaneously deployed at many locations
- Positioned the company to provide more responsive and flexible support going forward, through a new virtual SAP infrastructure

According to Schwarz, Deloitte's guidance and experience were essential to these outcomes. "I think Deloitte AMS goes above and beyond to make sure that virtual models work — bridging the gap for resources and bringing in the rest of the team to ensure that others know how to operate in that same model."

"We [originally] started implementing SAP module-by-module for some of our locations. Launching a large-scale program to implement many modules at multiple locations at once has been an evolutionary journey, but Deloitte has been there in a number of different capacities to help."

– Diane Schwarz, Director of IT for Bell Helicopter

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