shearwater
better business today & tomorrow

ORACLE NETSUITE

9 Lessons Learned from Global 'Multi-site' Deployment of NetSuite.

The multi-site global deployment of ERP systems are infinitely more complex than a single site and the lessons learned on the journey are often learned the hard way. However, we take heart knowing that we do better when we know better.

Background

Client: Primary Use Case (2017 realize

Task: Our client wanted to bring their 45 subsidiary companies onto a single platform to align global processes relating to sales, operations and finance.

This entailed: Integration of 450 users, Removal of approximately 25 individual subsystems, Provide executives with real-time operational reporting, 36 months to realize a team: 5 functional analysts and 2 technical resources.

Lesson #1

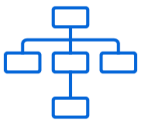
Don't change the Chart of Accounts (CoA)

The CoA is the backbone of any accounting system and NetSuite is no different.

1. Review the local entity's CoA against the system accounts provided by NetSuite at the commencement of each deployment and, to the fullest extent possible, avoid materially adjusting the CoA during the program.
2. Be ruthless in maintaining a singular and streamlined CoA, and resist additional accounts until capitulation is inevitable

Lesson #2

Get the classifications (Department / Class / Location / Custom) right the first time



Classifications are the elevator in a building and if you get it wrong, it's very tricky to move them later. Clients tend to transpose their understanding of something similar from their existing system and use analogy to justify the decision to classify something.

1. Think outside the box and understand what it is that you really want to achieve from the system.
2. Once clear, challenge and retest the basic assumptions supporting the defined classifications.
3. Use practical examples to ensure the true blending of role permissions, user behaviour and that general ledger impact aligns with the overall requirement.

Lesson #3

Architect local compliance at commencement

Tax is a subset of local compliance. The more tricky pieces of the compliance puzzle to solve are reporting, electronic accounting, electronic invoicing and formatting of the transaction ledger which are all crucial to....???

1. Ensure you obtain clarity on the different local requirements prior to commencing.
2. Build a clear picture of how the local compliance needs can be addressed; if not in detail, in principle as a minimum.

Lesson #4

Understand local tax early on

NetSuite supports tax in a particular way but in many geographies the tax treatment is incomplete. It is essential that we resist the desire to 'plug a local tax problem' with a local tax bundle. These bundles are often too specific in purpose, have a huge overlap and add bulk to the system.

1. Demarcate the tax scope—what is required and what is not—and set this as a project deliverable with a clear strategy.
2. SuiteTax will help, but it's only a tool that enables what you need, it's not the holy grail.

Lesson #5

Stay firm and consistent

When bringing multiple businesses together using a common set of processes, there will be conflict and resistance inevitably.

1. Bring the functionality back to MVP.
2. Once the core processes are validated across a number of different sized entities, resist the temptation to tweak, change and improve the configuration.
3. Stay firm and consistent in the application and adoption of validated processes. This will help in assessing what works in the long run.

Lesson #6

Identify suitable process owner and process analyst

Each process needs an owner (business) and an analyst (system) and these two people must have a symbiotic relationship of mutual empathy. The owner must understand the system's base functionality, while the analyst must understand the business needs in detail. Choosing the right owner is tricky because they must be empowered, interested, motivated, open to change and most importantly—they must be supportive. Experience has proven that the wrong choice of a process owner can be costly—a year of time.

1. Start small and as the number of sites on the system grows, broaden the base of process owners to improve business participation within the program.

Lesson #7

Incentivise the team and the businesses

Programs can be hard to maintain because certain battles are repeated time and again in different sites and locations. The implementation teams' passions are ground down and the enthusiasm starts to wane.

On the other hand, people also relate to change differently. Generally, 10% will actively seek change for their own improvement while most need to be incentivised, motivated, encouraged and coerced into change.

1. Define what people get for their effort, cooperation and assistance within the program management plan and act on it accordingly.

Lesson #8

Organise team, standards and rituals

For a program involving sites across the world, team culture is vital and the reliance on each other becomes even more critical.

1. Define your program standards for output, knowledge transfer and participation early.
2. Get the team behind a common rule book and stay true to this guide.
3. Progressively build momentum with the team, bringing them together to share, align and create trust with each other.
4. A solid deployment team will, in time, create its own force of positive and forward-moving momentum.

Lesson #9

Follow a clear change control process

Change control is a pillar of information systems management and it is essential within implementation and change programs.

1. Establish a steering committee with a clear mandate and communicate expectations. Assess what is and is not permissible for change review.
2. Ensure there is a representative who can straddle the C-Suite and the Shopfloor; always keeping true to identifying shared synergy and alignment of process.

To sum up…

We thought we knew what to do going into this program but we ended up learning these lessons along the way.

If we had to sum up what we learnt and want to pass on in a few words, it would be this:

Get clear. Be organised. And follow through.

About the Shearwater group:

Independent Oracle NetSuite / Workday Adaptive Planning Partner in Asia and Europe
2007 Singapore, 2012 Japan, 2016 China …
90+ consultants
More than 100 customers and projects, from fortune 15 to start-ups
Several times recognized partner of the year, constantly 5 stars partner
Suiteapp developments and sales, localizations

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