Suburban Propane, Whippany, NJ

BUSINESS POWER AND SAVINGS WITH SAP® ERP & VIRTUALIZATION

> I was very appreciative of all the hard work and dedication itelligence* put forward in what has to be one of the more successful projects we have had at Suburban by many accounts. The manner in which everyone worked together toward a common goal was exemplified by the collaboration that took place throughout the well-planned and executed project, culminating in a product that was delivered on time and under budget.

Neil Scanlon, Senior Vice President – Information Services, Suburban Propane

Challenges

- Heavily customized system with complex interfaces
- Some SAP components were rarely used, knowledge-intensive for users
- Multiple teams/partners involved

Solutions

- SAP ERP 6.0 (Enhancement Pack 7)
- Platform migration (HPUX to Linux) via a Sandbox

Benefits

- Improved performance
- Version of SAP that is supported
- Financial savings through virtualization
- Positioned for future enhancements

Why NTT DATA Business Solutions?

- Consultative approach and shared project philosophies
- Deep product knowledge resources
- Multi-dimensional project management
- Ability to collaborate with and manage multiple partners

Company: Suburban Propane Partners, L.P
Industry: Oil, gas and electricity
Products: Nationwide distributor of propane, fuel oil and related products and services; marketer of natural gas and electricity
Number of employees: 3800
Headquarters: Whippany, NJ
Website: http://www.suburbanpropane.com/

* Since April 1, 2021 itelligence is operating as NTT DATA Business Solutions

NTT DATA Business Solutions

SAP Platinum Partner

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~20% under budget

Re-Energizing ERP

After running a highly customized SAP R/3 4.7 system for 10 years, Suburban decision makers knew the company needed to upgrade. Mark Knorr, Senior Manager - IS Applications, Suburban Propane, said, "We understood an accounting change was coming in 2017 related to leases > 1 year. After calling SAP, we understood this 'enhancement' would not be made available to R/3 4.7 customers. Our choices were to upgrade or create a custom solution. After some internal discussion the choice was made to perform the upgrade. At the same time we looked at our infrastructure and decided to overhaul that as well."

According to Knorr, Suburban's Technical Team was interested in moving away from HPUX to Linux to create a less expensive license and support option and provide a more supported operating system for the future. The team also wanted to virtualize the entire environment to achieve more horsepower and storage flexibility. Additional benefits would be generated through cloud backup and restore capabilities.

Finding the Right Partner

Suburban needed to be absolutely sure it made the right choice in selecting an implementation partner. Additional factors made the project scope more complex than usual. For one, in addition to having its own IT teams, Suburban uses multiple partners/ customer service providers for outsourced support of its Basis and oil and gas secondary distribution (OGSD) process components. Suburban needed a partner that could balance the technical knowledge required for this project with tight logistical management and open collaboration skills.

Knorr knew NTT DATA Business Solutions was the right partner for the project. "Our decision was ultimately made because of the comfort level we felt with NTT DATA Business Solutions through multiple face-to-face meetings and detailed discussions over time," said Knorr. "It was a combination of their knowledge and experience, as well as our trust in their ability to do the project in a way that fit our culture. We believed they would be collaborative with our internal team and partners."

Transformation in Multiple Steps

A decision was made to upgrade Suburban from SAP R/3 4.7 to SAP ERP 6.0 Enhancement Pack 7 via a parallel environment. A Sandbox (SBX) was added to the landscape during the upgrade to provide the necessary additional iterations of the upgrade process and corresponding test and technical efforts to ensure the success of the upgrade. A final piece of the project involved converting Suburban's system to be Unicode Compliant. The entire project took place from mid-October 2014 through mid-May 2015. In the end, the Go Live was impressively completed by all parties in a challenging four-day window.

Ultimately, the project was a success because all parties stayed focused on, and executed, their respective roles. Success also came from repeatedly practicing and carefully documenting each transition process step before the final event. NTT DATA Business Solutions involved experienced and knowledgeable experts in areas such as Basis, workflow and technical support, and security and authorizations. Rather than having dedicated "safety net" resources that were not always required, developers and functional consultants were brought in at the right time with specific knowledge of upgrade impacts to critical objects or other project needs.

Suburban is now taking advantage of the improved performance of SAP ERP 6.0 and is well-positioned for future enhancements. Additionally, Suburban is realizing valuable financial savings because of the hardware refresh and transition to a virtual model.

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