

L A K E

A4e

Key Features

- SunSystems Financials
- SunSystems Vision, and Vision Alert
- Proactis Spend Control and Sales Invoicing
- Proactis Expense Claim Management



'Proactis has been really well received. We got a lot of positive feedback. People kept saying that it's a really fantastic system, that it's made a lot of difference.'

'SunSystems has simplified the analysis of costs and speeded up the reporting process.'

'LAKE have provided us with fantastic support, enabling us to concentrate on our day-to-day work without having to get too involved in the transition process'

Background

A4e provides products and services in five key areas:

- Employment and Training Solutions
- Business Support and Services
- Childcare and Education
- Fund Management and Distribution
- Financial Inclusion Services

A4e operates from over 170 locations across the UK, France, Germany, Poland and Israel and is recognised as one of the UK's premier organisations in the delivery of social change services on behalf of Government.

It has twice won awards in the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 Index and Inner City 100 index. 4,000 new participants start A4e's adult Welfare to Work programmes every month and they currently support 60,000 people back into work every year.

Annually, A4e provides support to over 12,000 small and medium sized enterprises through its two Business Links and in 2004/05 created over 5,000 jobs

A4e achieved turnover of more than £75m in 2005/06.

Critical Issues

A4e had outgrown their old financial management system which was based on a combination of Sage software with paper-based systems for purchasing. A4e had changed a great deal in the years since Sage was first introduced and with further growth planned a decision was taken to implement a system better suited to the needs of a developing international business.

James Locking, Financial Controller for A4e, explains:

'A4e has 250 cost centres spread over more than 100 locations and we are taking on additional cost centres all the time. Sage is simply not suited to our kind of multi dimensional business'

One of their key concerns relates to the visibility and control of spend. James continues ...

'We had a paper-based system for purchasing. Supplier invoices would go to the local office where the order was raised. Invoices were then batched up and sent to the Sheffield head office for processing ...'

.. When you are a growing business with over one hundred offices, it's quite easy to lose track of what you are actually buying, especially when purchases are made at such a local level ...

.. If someone was to ask me "what do we spend on training or on marketing or on advertising", I would not have that information easily available to me. We would have to spend a lot of time going through Nominal codes in Sage and trying to work it out.'

Operational Efficiency and Spend Control

In seeking a replacement finance system, A4e conducted a thorough review of alternatives. As a result of that search Lake Financial Systems was selected to deliver the market-leading SunSystems and Proactis solution for Financial Management and Spend Control.

James Locking explains their reasons for choosing SunSystems and Proactis:

'Proactis has allowed us to streamline our purchasing processes. All invoices come directly in to Head Office rather than having to wait for a hundred offices to mail batches of invoices on a weekly basis. It has really improved the system for payment of suppliers and we have much better visibility of spend...

SunSystems has simplified the analysis of costs and speeded up the reporting process. With SunSystems we are now delivering multi-dimensional reports, with online drill-down, something we could not do with Sage'

Selecting a new system is as much about selecting the right supplier as it is about selecting the right software.

'The presentation by LAKE was very impressive. They listened to our concerns and made appropriate recommendations. We looked into LAKE's background and found that they are a strong company. It was also helpful that I had previous experience of working with LAKE. I know from personal experience that they are a supplier I can trust.'

Towards a successful implementation of Spend Control

The implementation of Spend Control was split into two phases. The first phase involved the introduction and subsequent roll out of the Proactis Expense Claim Management system.

Prior to the introduction of Proactis, the administration of staff expenses had been cumbersome and time-consuming for everyone involved.

James Locking explains:

'You can imagine 900 pieces of paper coming in on the deadline date! You then had to file them by company and then key them in...

.. and people makes mistakes on their expense claims. We would have to manually check the adding up before it could be keyed in and then paid...

.. It was taking 2 people in Finance 4 days each to process staff expenses...

.. Another major concern was that more and more people are out of office. They would have to spend a day coming in to the office, fill the form in and then if their manager wasn't around they would have to get on the phone and ask "where are you today?"...

.. expenses were sometimes being paid a month late because their manager was not able to authorise the claim in time for the deadline.'

The implementation of Proactis Expense Claim Management has led to a dramatic reduction in the time taken to process expense claims. And the system has proved itself to be universally popular.

James Locking explains:

'It's worth saying that there are three major areas of benefit: one for the user; it takes the pressure off; it can be done daily, weekly, or whenever; you don't have to get it done all in one go. Secondly, from the authorisation point of view, it is easier, it's quicker, you can authorise more than one claim at a time and it's in the same place; you don't have to go to an office to sign a piece of paper, you can do it wherever you are. And, finally, from the finance point of view, I have saved 7 working days a month, thus taking my team members out of having to add it up, key it in, and sometime key it in again. Now I pretty much run a Vision report and I'm done...

.. Proactis has been really well received. We got a lot of positive feedback. People kept saying that it's a really fantastic system, that it's made a lot of difference'

.. and with bringing in a procurement system it's good to know that the fear factor has gone. They know about Proactis, they know how to log onto it and all the issues concerned with setting people up and gaining access to the system have been addressed.'

LAKE Service

LAKE is the UK's No.1 implementer of Financial Management and Spend Control solutions based on SunSystems and Proactis. Reflecting on the service provided by LAKE, James Locking makes the following observations:

'LAKE did a great job of getting us up and running quickly. Over a two month period they helped us migrate eight companies into the new system ...

LAKE have provided us with fantastic support, enabling us to concentrate on our day-to-day work without having to get too involved in the transition process ...

We have had very few issues to refer back to them. And when we have, they have been most helpful. The helpdesk has been particularly strong, providing us with speedy resolution of our questions.'

Contact

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