

GOODSTART EARLY LEARNING

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- Mark Pellas

SAP Program Manager

THE CLIENT

Goodstart Early Learning (Goodstart) is Australia’s largest provider of early learning and care as well as the country’s largest non-government provider of preschool and kindergarten programs. The not-for-profit employs 14,900 people, including 1500-plus teachers, and provides high quality early learning to more than 70,700 children across 671 early learning centres.

CHALLENGE

Goodstart commenced operations in late 2009 by taking over the financially-viable centres run by ABC Learning.

Through this and other acquisitions, it inherited a number of duplicate systems and processes, and by 2014 had decided it needed to re-platform to a single environment and unified way of working.

Such a core transformation represented a major undertaking for Goodstart. As a not-for-profit, it was used to a lean operating model. However, the size and breadth of its operations meant there were multiple ways to run finance, human resources, payroll and procurement processes internally.



IT WAS NOT ONLY CHALLENGING TO EXECUTE THOSE PROCESSES BUT ALSO TO REPORT ON THEM IN A WAY THAT MET THE NEEDS OF ITS EXECUTIVES, MANAGERS AND OTHER COMPLIANCE OVERSEERS.

Goodstart identified a need to lay down fresh technology foundations - to re-platform onto a new single environment for its core business systems and reporting in order to get better visibility of how each childcare centre operated, and with a view to uplifting operational and financial capability and performance across the group.

THE SOLUTION

Goodstart initiated a request for proposals (RFP) process. One of the respondents to that was a consortium led by Viatek, which promised to bring a collective best-of-breed approach - both from a systems and delivery perspective - to the project.

Viatek's novel approach put it ahead of other RFP respondents and ultimately led it to win the project. Bringing considerable thought leadership, domain expertise and project experience to the table, Viatek proved a safe pair of hands to guide such a large-scale and critical package of work.

It was determined that Goodstart's operations would be re-platformed onto SAP Business Suite on HANA, which offered a way to run SAP ERP Central Component (ECC) 6.0 on a next-generation HANA database. From there, more SAP solutions, such as for data warehousing and reporting, could be layered on top.

Most existing processes were moved to SAP via a gradual lift-and-shift; however, where the new SAP platform had out-of-the-box functionality that was considered fit-for-purpose and easier to use, Goodstart leveraged this to transform some of its processes.

THE BENEFITS

Once appointed, Viatek led the entire project, co-locating with internal Goodstart resources for a combined team of around 45 people at the project's height.

“ The teams worked well together and although we were a small group and had a broad scope, we collaborated well to best understand how to approach the migration, and then delivered it without disruption to the business or its important childcare operations”

- Mark Pellas | SAP Program Manager

The teams worked closely with subject matter experts from across Goodstart to understand how to approach the migration, and then delivered it without disruption to the business or its important childcare operations.

WE'D LOVE TO HELP
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Some aspects, such as payroll, were particularly complex, with the conditions of a number of different enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs) needing to be reflected in the new system. A massive build and testing effort ensued, and the new payroll system went live without issue for almost 15,000 staff, a major relief to the business.



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Centralised procurement was also a major benefit, bringing visibility, oversight and cost savings to the purchasing of materials and supplies.

Additional benefits came from harmonising data from disparate existing systems into SAP. Locating, cleaning and ingesting that data was a considerable undertaking, but one where the project team excelled.

With common processes, data standards, datasets and KPIs established across Goodstart, the organisation is now able to easily compare the financial and operational performance of its various centres, and produce fast and meaningful reports.

The entire project was delivered on time and under budget. Once delivered, Viatek seamlessly shifted into a business-as-usual role, providing ongoing application management and support.

Goodstart now runs its business on a modernised core with simple, standardised processes and reporting.