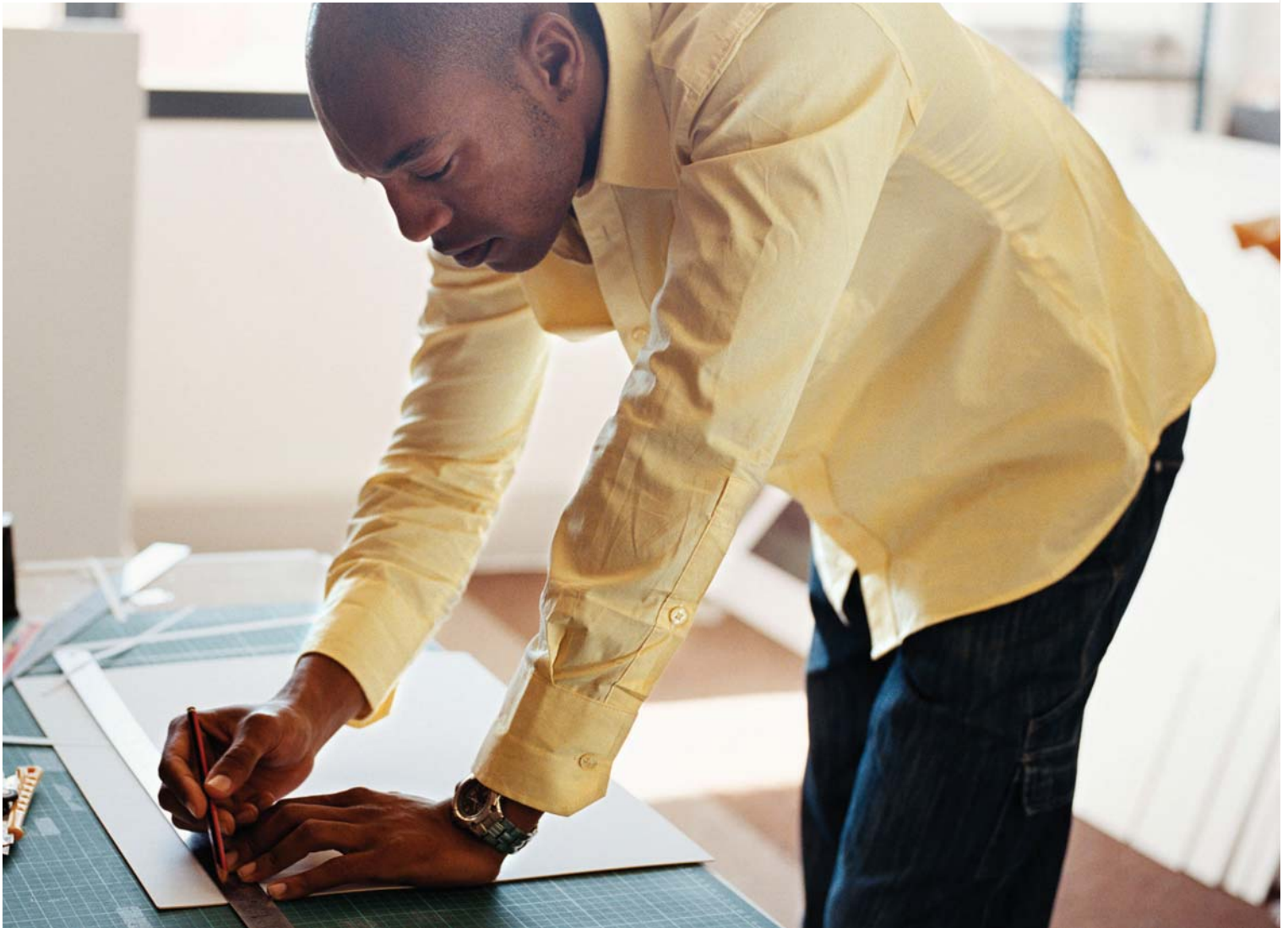


Case study:  
Halcrow



ERP... with NO Expiry Date™





## Changing businesses need agile systems

Global competition, tighter margins and increased regulation mean today's businesses live in a state of constant change. The ability to adapt quickly to shifting market conditions, seizing opportunities in line with business objectives and avoiding potential pitfalls, is critical.



'Hex' Train

### Halcrow Benefits

- Low cost of ownership
- Post implementation agility to support future growth
- Multi-currency capabilities that supports reporting in local currencies
- Speed of access to accurate information and the transparency that gives to each project
- The ability to introduce one way of working across the entire group
- Improved management of cashflow due to quality and visibility of data
- Ability to carry out more sophisticated analysis of market trends.

Successful change depends on fast, easy access to accurate, consistent, real-time information to measure performance, analyse and adapt. It depends equally as much though on the ability of the organisation's business systems to enable change whenever needed. Put another way, it requires post implementation agility. It also demands that the system constantly evolves alongside the company.

Halcrow, the UK-based infrastructure planning, design and management specialist, is a powerful illustration of the need for a people-centric, service organisation to remain flexible to stay ahead. Organised into five main business groups focusing on transport, water, property, maritime and consulting, Halcrow has a turnover in excess of £300 million with 6000 employees based across a global network of 70 offices, supporting projects in over 130 countries.

## Ambitious

Halcrow is an acquisitive company with big ambitions. It continues to achieve its growth targets, almost doubling in size in the last three years alone, through its ability to analyse and make strategic decisions based on data in which everyone has confidence, from the chief executive to the local administrators in the overseas offices.

Central to that is Halcrow's core business system, Agresso Business World, which ensures that its global operations have a consistent approach to financial reporting and project accounting, giving an accurate, real-time picture of the business' performance by sector, region or client.

Jim Billingham, finance director of Halcrow's water and utilities business group, who led the Agresso implementation project, says: "Introducing Agresso as our core business system was critical in helping us move forward. It's been a major contributor that Agresso is so agile and changes with us so we can structure and run the group in the way we want."

## Change

Standing still was never on the agenda at Halcrow. Since Agresso was implemented in 1999, the group has undergone two major restructures and now realigns its businesses on an annual basis to reflect objectives for the coming financial year. Alongside, the company has invested constantly in its Agresso system to ensure it keeps pace with the changing shape and direction of the company.

Jeremy Burroughs, Halcrow's systems accountant, who manages the Agresso system, notes: "Agresso does have a low cost of ownership. It's not a capital intensive system, it is well supported and constantly being developed, so there are real business benefits to upgrading and fine tuning it. Time spent doing that is much more cost effective than searching for a new system every couple of years."

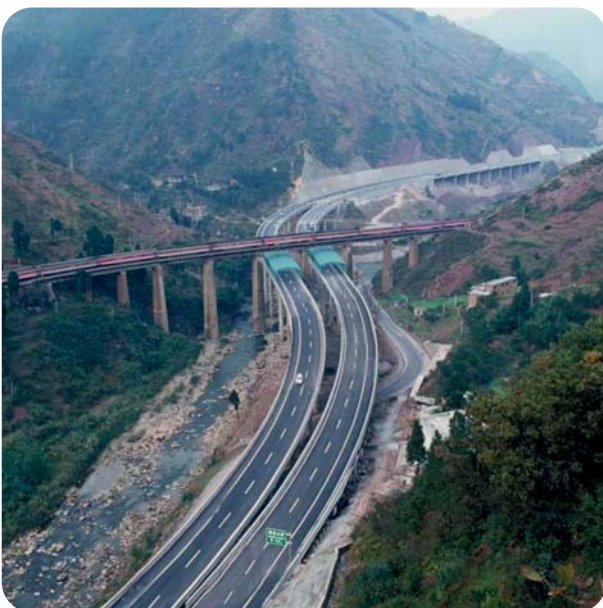
"Introducing Agresso as our core business system was critical in helping us move forward. It's been a major contributor that Agresso is so agile and changes with us so we can structure and run the group in the way we want."

“In Agresso it is quick and easy to change attributes, relations and trees, write new reports, refine business processes and introduce more efficient workflows to reflect what you want from the system.”

Agresso's simple, open architecture and the company's approach of transferring knowledge from implementation mean that the system can quickly and easily be adapted, unlike traditional ERP systems, without any specialised IT knowledge or heavy reliance on consultancy from the vendor.

Investing in and then adapting a system that is flexible and agile is significantly more rewarding. Burroughs says: “In Agresso it is quick and easy to change attributes, relations and trees, write new reports, refine business processes and introduce more efficient workflows to reflect what you want from the system. It's also easy to add new companies as we expand and to account for joint ventures.”

As well as the regular service pack and full version upgrades, Halcrow has introduced more and more functionality from the wide-ranging, fully integrated system. Burroughs says: “Agresso Business World's modular build allows you to choose the elements applicable to your organisation so you can get the most benefit out of the system and achieve your business objectives at a reasonable cost.”



'Chongzun Expressway' – China

## Multi-currency

Improving its reporting has been at the centre of recent changes. The most significant achievement has been the way Halcrow uses Agresso's multi-currency capabilities. Burroughs and his team have enabled the system to report in any currency, allowing project managers in the field to manage their project entirely in the local currency. The net result is that although there is just one Agresso system based in the UK, every Halcrow user worldwide experiences a system that appears to have been built in their own local currency.

Halcrow project managers are largely self-sufficient, able to drill down to the detail, make enquiries and run their own reports, budgets, forecasts and accounts all in their local currency. The data is then automatically converted by Agresso, using pre-loaded exchange rate information updated on a monthly basis, into UK sterling, so that all the accounts are consolidated in £.

Halcrow has a philosophy of using the best possible resource for each individual project in the most cost efficient way, wherever a person may be based in the world. When a project manager looking at the resource pool for a particular skill calls up staff cost rate information in Agresso, it is automatically translated from the currency that person is paid in, into the project manager's local currency. That allows them to judge, on a month by month basis, whether it is more cost effective to use someone paid in US \$, New Zealand \$ or Thai baht for example.

The same applies for infrastructure costs which can be incurred in any number of other currencies; Agresso simply converts them into the local currency and then consolidates in £. The system can cope with hedged currencies and also automatically adjusts budgets and forecasts as timeframes change and for projects whose scope has been extended.



'Docklands Light Railway' – UK

Australia was the first country to use this functionality and Burroughs reports that it's been a great success: "That operation is much more efficient and profitable now. If all the currency issues are transparent, project managers don't need to spend time doing currency translations and concerning themselves with exchange rate fluctuations, which can be vast over the lifetime of a major infrastructure project. The result is they're more productive and more in control."

Having a single Agresso system, rather than one for each of its 50 companies, is lower maintenance as there is only one set of exchange rates to input. Just four people centrally, plus local administration staff, input all the group's project accounting information.

Although it is an illustration of Agresso's low cost of ownership, Burroughs insists: "Whilst driving down the cost of administration is a bonus, it is just that. The real benefit comes from the speed with which the information is available, the accuracy of it and the transparency that gives to each project."

## Expectations

The Halcrow Group has been built around a culture of welcoming and embracing change, as well as empowerment. Every one of the 6000 employees uses Agresso, at the very least to submit weekly timesheets, and Burroughs says they have very high expectations of the system. "People are thriving on the information they can extract from Agresso and constantly want to do more and more with it."

The system works 24/7, 365 days a year as Halcrow staff in different time zones access project information around the clock. Burroughs' aim is to use their expertise to further develop use of the system.

"People are thriving on the information they can extract from Agresso and constantly want to do more and more with it."

“The agility of the Agresso system, the quality of information and the improved control it has given us, has clearly helped us become a more efficient and profitable organisation.”

## Functionality

Halcrow is considering developments using Agresso's resource planning and deployment facility, enabling the group to define and map its capacity by employee / contractor, by grade, skill or cost centre and match those resources against scheduled future projects.

Halcrow is also looking to build its many audited quality standards into Agresso workflows so that ensuring compliance with them becomes part of the everyday process rather than a separate activity.

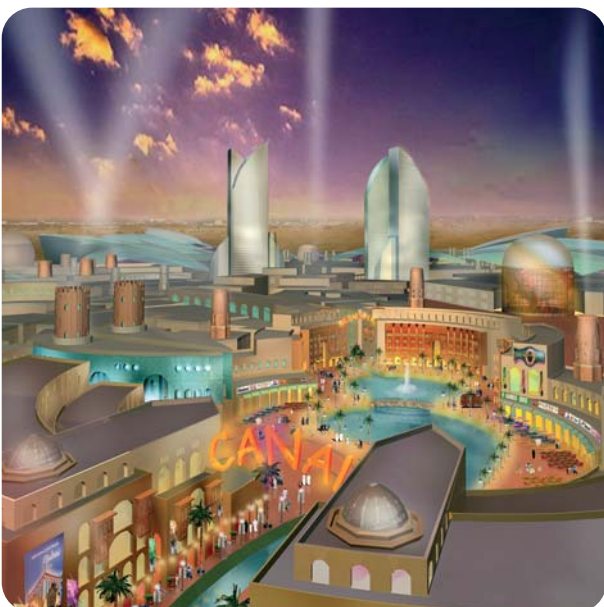
The company plans to scan most of its financial documents into Agresso and hold the information in a database on the storage area network space on the server. This would extend the range of data that project staff could access online on a self-service basis rather than have to request from finance. It is also enabling Halcrow to take the paper records out of its offices and free up the space for more people in line with its aggressive growth plans.

When the upgrade to the next version, Agresso Business World 5.5, is complete, Halcrow wants to make much more use of fast and easy web-based access to Agresso's wide-ranging functionality. Extending the use of invoice manager, budget manager, web timesheets and web expenses outside the UK (with automatic local VAT and tax treatment) is also on the agenda.

## Partner

Thanks to Agresso's knowledge transfer approach, Halcrow carries out most of the changes to its Agresso system itself but the company does work closely with Agresso as a partner. Developing the multi-currency capabilities was one example of combining its own knowledge of the system, and how it wanted it to work, with Agresso's expertise to build flagship functionality that could be implemented by other Agresso customers.

Halcrow's partnership philosophy means putting its own customers at the centre of its operations and using Agresso to meet specific customer needs such as the demand for mid-month invoicing.



'Dubailand' – The Dubai walk in the downtown area

## Single

The single most important and visible benefit from using Agresso, says Halcrow, has been the ability to introduce one way of working across the entire group. Since all the reporting, forecasting and analysis is done in the same way, it is easy to check performance and act quickly to tackle any potential issues before they become a problem.

Billinghurst says: "The quality and visibility of the data, which can be retrieved very quickly, has sharpened our commercial awareness and undoubtedly improved our management of cashflow."

Equally, Halcrow can identify and build on its strengths. "We are carrying out much more analysis of market trends by region, sector or client so we can identify and exploit opportunities quickly based on solid business information in which we all have absolute confidence," Billinghurst adds.

2005 was a very successful year for Halcrow. "The agility of the Agresso system, the quality of information and the improved control it has given us, has clearly helped us become a more efficient and profitable organisation," confirms Billinghurst. That will need to continue if this dynamic group is to meet its stated targets for growth.

## Halcrow technical information

- **Server Operating System:**  
Windows Server 2003
- **Server architecture used to host RDBMS:**  
Windows Server 2003
- **Thin client solution:** Citrix MetaFrame  
Presentation Server 3 using nFuse
- **RDBMS:** Microsoft SQL Server 2005
- **Client Operating System:**  
Windows XP Professional
- **Network Operating System:**  
Windows Server 2003 Active Directory



## Agresso Business World. The agile business management system

Today's top performing organisations need to be able to accommodate significant change without disrupting their business. However many systems, once implemented, lack the agility to respond to such change resulting in time consuming and costly redesign or replacement. Agresso Business World's seamless integration between its various business applications, workflow management and powerful reporting / analytics ensures that business change in any of these areas is automatically reflected across the others without the need for system redesign.

This means Agresso Business World has the agility to keep pace with your business objectives long after the initial implementation resulting in a low total cost of ownership and faster realisation of business benefits.

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