



CASE STUDY – THE PFIZER CASE STUDY

When one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies decided to implement a new global database across 26 different countries, it began by aligning and harmonising its processes. "Before you put in a new IT system, you have to get your business processes right," says Tony Smith, the managing consultant from Worldwide Business Solutions who is leading the project.

Just what the doctor ordered

Recording any adverse reactions which users of its drugs might experience is a legal obligation for all pharmaceutical companies: armed with that information, they have to decide whether a product's labelling must change to ensure its continued safe use in the market place. To both gather such essential data and to act upon it, they need the right processes in place, and the right IT system.

A Worldwide Business Solutions team led by Tony Smith is currently rolling out a new global database for a US-based pharmaceutical company, which will revolutionise the way it collects and disseminates case data from its worldwide operations.

"This client already had a database system at its headquarters, but one which didn't allow other countries to access it or to input data," explains Tony. "All they could do was fax or e-mail information which was then entered centrally - a time-intensive approach which created a mountain of unnecessary paper and made for very inefficient communication.

"What we're now in the midst of implementing across 26 European countries is a global database system. It will allow data entry to happen in each country, it will reduce multiple data entry around the world - previously everyone entered case details into their own system - and it will provide the company with one global view of



each case. It also increases the consistency of the data and saves considerable time.”

The start point for this project, as for every other, was not the IT system - which in this case had already been chosen - but the process. “You have to get the processes aligned and harmonised before you think about putting in a new system,” stresses Tony. “Our brief was to use our knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry to design the perfect process. Only when you’ve introduced that process can you specify the functionality of the system.”

Designing the perfect process, he explains, involved “sitting in a dark room and thinking about a blue-sky solution regardless of reality”. The next step was “to touch reality, by going out to the countries and gathering inputs from their management teams, and then running some pilots to see if the process would work.”

Having an in-depth understanding of the different issues that the countries face is critical. “To get the right result you have to understand the culture of the countries that you’re working in. Projects sponsored by a head office are rarely seen as relevant by overseas operations unless you involve the local management. Every country we’ve worked with on this project has been fundamentally different, and it’s essential we recognise the unique issues that they’re each facing.”

You also need to be clear about what the head office wants. “The process you develop can be as centralised or as decentralised as you want to make it - the final shape it takes is directed entirely by the client. We were continually in touch with the management team to make sure that we were heading in the direction they wanted us to go.”

The WBS team also worked hard to win the confidence of those they were working with. “You have to be very sensitive to the fact that the existing processes have usually evolved over a number of years,” says Tony. “People often feel a great sense of ownership for them, and we have to respect that. We make it clear that if processes are working well, then we don’t change them. Our role isn’t to criticise, but to work with them.”



One major challenge has been developing a process which satisfies two conflicting pressures: while the countries need a process which satisfies their own local legislation, the company's head office needs a process which meets its own - different - set of reporting requirements. "We've had to design a process which meets both these pressures. It's harmonised at the highest system level, but still allows for local differences."

He expects the benefits, which the new system will deliver to the pharmaceutical company to be far-reaching. "They'll be able to feel confident that their processes are under control in Europe, that they're as streamlined and efficient as possible, and that the countries have a clear understanding of all the customers in the process, which means the head office as well as their local regulator".

Greater visibility and technology transfer are further benefits. "We're implementing metrics so that senior management can see at a glance the state of the different processes, and we're giving people the ability to improve their processes on their own."

One strength he believes WBS has brought to the project - and which he questions whether other consultants could - is a customised approach. "We didn't arrive with a pre-packaged solution; we brought a set of principles and designed a tailored system. Plus we had experience of doing just this sort of project for others in the industry, so we understood their language and what's important to them."

The feedback so far has been very positive. "We've had people tell us 'this is the first time consultants have ever helped me'. When we arrived I think some saw us as auditors; now they see us as partners in their success, which is where we want to be." Much credit must go to the client. "We couldn't have achieved what we have without their dedication and support. They were ready for change, and they were the motivating force behind it."



**WORLDWIDE
BUSINESS
SOLUTIONS**

For More Information Please Contact: Joseph Turnbull

Worldwide Business Solutions: www.wwbgroup.com

The London Office

31, Candover Close

Harmondsworth

Middlesex, UB7 0BD

Tel: +44 (0) 208 7599631

Fax: +44 (0) 208 7599632

turnbull.j@wwbgroup.com