



Customer Profile

London Business School drives efficiency with Infor Expense Management



Facts at a glance

Product: Infor SunSystems,
Infor Expense Management

Industry: Education

Country: UK, with users in other countries

"Payments are typically made within a week, and processing time has decreased by approximately 70%. We have saved the equivalent of one full-time person, reducing overhead significantly."

**—Gary Newvell, Operations Systems
Manager, London Business School**

About the company

An international business school and a constituent college of the University of London, the London Business School ranks number one in the world by the Financial Times for its MBA programme. The school offers masters and non-masters programmes at its London, Dubai, Hong Kong, and Columbia campuses. More than 1,800 students enroll every year, and the executive education team serves over 8,000 executives across practices ranging from accounting and economics, to finance, marketing, and strategic and international management. The school also provides consultancy services to companies and governments including AstraZeneca, the BBC, BP, the EU, JP Morgan, and the United Nations.

Setting the strategy

As part of an efficiency-led initiative, London Business School undertook a strategic review of its expense management processes. The review identified that the processing of expense claims relied heavily on manual input, which was timeconsuming, inconsistent, and inefficient.

More than 350 of the school's 400 employees regularly claim expenses, and its accounts team processes approximately 500 separate claims each month. Expenses mainly comprise travel and entertainment items, and the team must analyse each carefully to ensure assignment to the correct cost centres. They must also capture expense information to ensure that the VAT analysis is accurate and comprehensive, irrespective of where expenses are incurred.

Before 2009, this was a complex task, since the account team collected expense information using spreadsheets, which had to be checked manually. The business school concluded that it needed to exploit opportunities for greater analysis of expense claim data, and that the cost of expense management processing was simply too high.

Getting business specific

London Business School looked at a number of options to streamline its expense management processes. The school quickly discounted outsourcing the entire process, since it simply would have moved an inefficient process to a third party, and been prohibitively expensive. The selection team identified expense claim automation solutions and subjected them to a rigorous evaluation.

Following an exhaustive evaluation of the shortlisted solutions, Infor™ Expense Management was the choice for its functional capabilities, robustness, scalability, cost-effectiveness, and low-risk implementation. Another significant benefit was its rapid configurability to meet London Business School's specific process requirements.

None of the other software providers were able to compete with Expense Management's ability to allocate an expense to multiple cost centres in the required proportions, and none could allocate line items or any part of line items to any combination of cost centre or project code.

"Some expense management solutions can allocate predefined percentages of an expense to different cost centres, usually in multiples of 25%, but Expense Management can allocate the expense to meet our exact requirements," explains Gary Newvell, operations systems manager, London Business School. "If a single line item needs to be allocated to five cost centres using varying percentages—for example, 30% to department A, 6% to department B, 18% to department C, 39% to department D, and 7% to department E—the system is able to achieve this using standard functionality.

"Another benefit is the software's ability to integrate easily with our financial management software, Infor SunSystems, as well as our Business Objects business intelligence software," Newvell continues.

The implementation was successful and took just 25 days. "Our only regret is that we didn't take Infor's suggestion of a half-day training workshop to get our super-users up to speed with the system quickly," comments Newvell. "While the system is userfriendly, we would have boosted productivity even further by undertaking the workshop."

Seeing results

Following a short implementation, Infor Expense Management is now delivering major business benefits to London Business School.

"Expense Management has enabled us to simultaneously improve the calibre of our processes and reduce our costs," comments Newvell. "We are now seeing a much faster turnaround of expense claims with quicker reimbursements.

Employees can submit claims irrespective of their location as the system can be accessed on a PDA or a PC, expediting processing time further. Payments are typically made within a week, and processing time has decreased by approximately 70%. We have saved the equivalent of one full-time person, reducing overhead significantly."

The expense allocation capabilities within the system are delivering on their promised benefits, and VAT analysis is also much more efficient.

"VAT can only be claimed on those expenses that are 'wholly, exclusively, and necessarily' incurred in performing business duties," explains Newvell. "While a hotel room might be considered necessary, a bottle of wine from the hotel bar might not. Where both appear on the same expenses receipt, Expense Management ensures easy, accurate allocation, saving immense amounts of time during manual data entry.

"The solution also has an administration tool that provides great flexibility in the management of the system. The tool is a huge benefit as we can configure every aspect of the system using the tool's comprehensive capabilities. For example, we can align approvers' sign-off limits precisely with our business policy, and route expense claim documents using the inbuilt workflow engine according to any attribute, or combination of attributes, of the document or its contents."

"The management reporting function equips us with greater visibility and tighter control of information pertaining to expenses, supporting accountability, and boosting our procurement strategy," Newvell continues. "We have already derived additional cost savings through management information analysis on where the majority of spending is taking place, making it easier to negotiate better discounts with suppliers."

Doing business better

“Our previous expense claim process simply wasn’t sustainable in the era of public sector efficiency drives. Manual re-keying of data and the inevitable margin for error hindered productivity significantly,” Newwell concludes.

“Having used Expense Management for over six months now, we are benefiting from major efficiency savings and substantial productivity improvements. Infor has proved itself as a valued business partner, having provided flexible solutions that are closely aligned to our business needs, and we look forward to a continued relationship as we evolve and expand as an organisation.”



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