

**SAP Education
Customer Success Story**



Hindered by 1980s technology, international luxury goods manufacturer Waterford Crystal decided on a radical upgrade – and opted for SAP when selecting a new ERP system. The ‘Big Bang’ implementation was a huge success, thanks to the company’s major investment in training. Read how SAP Education supported Waterford’s ‘train the trainer’ strategy.


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CRYSTAL



WATERFORD CRYSTAL SUCCESS STORY

HOW WATERFORD CRYSTAL'S COMMITMENT TO TRAINING IS HELPING THEM REAP RICH REWARDS FROM THEIR SAP IMPLEMENTATION.

The Irish port of Waterford has been synonymous with the manufacture of the highest quality crystal glassware for over two centuries, and its reputation is as strong today as it's ever been.

A couple of years ago Waterford Crystal was voted the top world-class brand by American consumers, ahead of such famous names as Rolls-Royce, Bose, Harley-Davidson and Kodak. Now part of Waterford Wedgwood plc, one of the world's premier luxury lifestyle groups, the company has recently built on its reputation as a leader in prestigious tabletop and gift products by successfully expanding into fine china, flatware, and table and bed linen.

To support its current success and future growth, the company decided to radically upgrade its technology and after reviewing the available options, selected SAP. "The reason we went looking for an ERP product in the first place was that our current technology was outdated," says George Walsh, General Manager for Business Process Re-engineering at Waterford Crystal. "It was 1980s technology, had been heavily modified and it couldn't take us to where we needed to be in relation to getting closer to our customers and suppliers. We looked at all the packages and decided SAP was the best for us."



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INVESTING IN ADVANCE

The company's major investment in training was a crucial success factor in the implementation. Waterford Crystal has a tradition of keeping training in-house and using the 'train the trainer' model: "We began training the project team several months before the start of the project," confirms George. "We sent over 30 team members on 2-3 week courses at the SAP Training Centres before any consultants arrived. This meant that we were able to do our own configuration and gave us a head start in working with the implementation consultants."

To further support the training effort, Waterford Crystal's in-house IT trainer was seconded full time to the project to act as the SAP training co-ordinator, and the resources of the company's training department were made available to the project.

"A couple of months before the project went live, all users were given an introductory course in SAP," says George. "At this stage people knew the new system was on the way and in many cases were worried about it. The introductory course was as much a communication exercise to allay fears about the new system."

The three-hour course was attended by all relevant staff – including directors – and each session began with a brief video message from Waterford CEO John Foley to illustrate the support of the project from the very top. "We were confident that we had chosen the system that was best for Waterford, and that users only had to see it to realise what it could do for them," says George. "When compared to the old command line interface we were using, the SAP GUI would pretty much sell itself." The ease of use was demonstrated by running a couple of typical transactions, and the course also explained the reasons for the switch to SAP, how the system would integrate the different areas of the company, and the project timelines as they affected users. According to George Walsh, the training was a great success: "At the end of each course, every attendee filled out a questionnaire and a common comment was that people felt less daunted by the new system. For the first time since the project was launched people were actually looking forward to this new system."

"The company's major investment in training was a crucial success factor in the implementation."

Out of the project came a list of activity groups, which would be assigned to end-users. These activity groups then became training courses which were documented by the project team and stuck to a pre-designed template to ensure they all had the same look and feel. A trial run was undertaken on each course to get an idea of how much time should be allocated, and a full training schedule drawn up.

AN ONGOING COMMITMENT

To date, Waterford Crystal's 70 trainers have delivered around 120 courses – ranging in length from two hours to two days – to over 500 trainees, and on average each person has spent five full days in training. "From the start we understood that training was of fundamental importance to the success of the project, so an agreement was reached whereby a sign on to SAP would not

be given unless someone attended training. The training co-ordinator signed off on every request for access to an activity group. No exceptions were made to this rule, and this has been kept to this day."

Not surprisingly, the SAP system has gained a high approval rating among users. "We interviewed all our users in a post-implementation review in July 2002," confirms George Walsh. "We closed out 90% of their issues, and where problems persist we are re-training individuals as necessary."

QUALITY RESULTS

Waterford Crystal has now extended its SAP implementation into its Turnkey centre in New Jersey and the recently acquired Stuart Crystal, with user training continuing to play a major part. "There are so many benefits from the SAP implementation," confirms George. "But probably the most important change is that we've become a process rather than function driven company."

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