

Case Study

Leading Construction Company Continues to Build & Succeed with Advanced Business Solutions' HR Software solution

Client: Barhale

Sector: Construction

Barhale has grown tremendously since its inception in 1980 and today is one of the UK's leading civil engineering contractors, with a turnover in excess of £110 million and a network of bases across the country. Barhale comprises core civil engineering business units providing expertise in areas such as water & sewerage, rail, process, tunnelling, engineering services and utilities.

Key clients include, Severn Trent Water, Thames Water, the @One Alliance, which includes Anglian Water, telent and London Underground and notable projects consist of the Bewdley River Flood Defence, Thames Tideway Scheme and the Kings Cross development in London.

Barhale started as a two-man company, working from a converted garage and now employs almost 900 people. Although there have been many changes in the growth and development of Barhale, certain factors remain constant from the earliest days. The "can do" attitude still prevails, and integrity and trust are still cornerstones of the business. A culture of continuous improvement is firmly entrenched within the company and the value it places on its employees is acknowledged through its Investors in People accreditation.

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Barhale's HR & Payroll function includes a team of 8 based at the Head Office in Walsall in the West Midlands, servicing offices in London, Cheshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.

The success and growth of Barhale meant that in 2003 a project team, headed up by Stephanie Johnson, Barhale's HR Manager was set up to identify a new HR solution.

Stephanie comments: "Our existing HR Software solution was extremely inflexible and we were unable to make any changes to the system at all which, as you can imagine, was extremely frustrating for a growing business. Likewise, the reporting and the ability to pull off management information was impossible. Barhale has achieved so much in such a short space of time through continuous improvement and innovation. HR could not afford to stand still and as Barhale people are at the core of everything we achieve the importance of identifying the right HR software solution for us was paramount."

Barhale's search began at Softworld's HR & Payroll software show where all the leading HR & Payroll software suppliers were exhibiting. Barhale created a short-list of suppliers before inviting three in to demonstrate their solutions.

Stephanie comments: "We had strict criteria in that the HR software needed to be rich in functionality, easy to use, have a flexible and powerful report writer and the capability of allowing us to be able to configure the software ourselves. We definitely did not want to go with an HR software supplier whose system would be inflexible and reliant on the supplier making any changes to our system. We were just not prepared to pay for expensive consultancy costs on an ongoing basis."

Stephanie continues, "From an IT perspective we needed an HR Software solution that was written in the latest technology, would fit in with our existing IT infrastructure and had the ability to integrate with other applications."

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Barhale received a glowing reference from one of Advanced Business Solutions' construction industry customers, decided to purchase Advanced Business Solutions' HR software solution.

Implementing Advanced Business Solutions' HR solution

Barhale had extremely strict implementation timescales and Advanced Business Solutions managed to complete the project on time and within budget. They have an extremely experienced project and implementation team who adopt a methodology that provides the framework, processes, guidelines and techniques to achieve successful implementations.

Advanced Business Solutions also has a thorough training curriculum delivered by a team of training professionals dedicated to providing a complete training service. The training facilities are based at an office in Hertfordshire providing the ideal learning environment for delegates.

Barhale's HR team completed Advanced Business Solutions' recommended training to ensure that all the users maximised their use of the system from day one and to allow Barhale to see a real return on its investment.

Sharon Southerton, Barhale's Payroll & Benefits Manager is the internal HR software product champion after completing all of the recommended training courses. Through the skills and knowledge acquired on her training and because the software is so flexible Sharon has been able to evolve the system as required.

Barhale has a very attractive benefits package for members of staff. Each one is allocated a number of points depending on their role and length of service with the company, which allows staff members to choose the benefits most relevant to them depending on their circumstances at any point in time.

Flexibility is key

The flexibility of Advanced Business Solutions' HR software has allowed Sharon to use the standard flexible benefits history and configure additional screens, fields and calculations. It has meant that all of Barhale staffs' flexible benefits are now completely managed by the software and the configuration work completed by Sharon has been a resounding success.

Sharon comments: "The training is excellent and it has given me the skills and confidence to configure the system over time, saving Barhale considerable time and money. The software is just so flexible and although it is easy to use, the configuration tool is extremely powerful. The flexible benefits configuration work has helped to raise the profile of HR and given us positive visibility amongst Barhale's employees."

The Construction Industry

The construction industry marketplace is unique in that companies need to manage employees CITB Skills, health and safety, occupational health, and the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS).

Before any employee goes on site they need to have a valid certificate, which proves that they have completed the relevant training for job that they are doing. Advanced Business Solutions' HR software keeps a record of all the training that each employee has undertaken and produces a report on any employee that might not have completed the relevant training course. Likewise, any employee involved in using plant on site needs to hold the relevant certificates. As the certificates have an expiry date, COA Solutions' HR software produces a report that notifies HR of which employee needs their certificate renewed.

Sharon comments: "All of our training records are held within the HR Software, allowing us to ensure that all of our employees have undertaken the necessary training applicable for their roles at Barhale. It is important to realise that in recent years a number of government legislation changes demand construction companies provide industry standard statistics. Thanks to the HR software we are able to report upon and provide this information when required."

The HR Software provides Barhale with multiple views allowing HR to access information on all current employees, leavers and employees at their different offices. The Directors have a global view too. Advanced Business Solutions' HR Software also enables Barhale to hold sub-contractors basic HR details within the system as a separate employee type and therefore away from all the main HR records.

A lot of construction contract awards are as a result of tender bids. Advanced Business Solutions' HR software can also help when tendering for projects. Because each employee's skill and competencies are held in the system, information about their experience, technical capability, relevant certificates and which industry sectors they have worked in can be made readily available.

Barhale also has an expansive car fleet of over 200 company cars, which is also managed by Advanced Business Solutions' HR software.

Management reporting strategy

As a growing company Barhale is always looking to deliver and improve in every area of their business. Spearheaded by Barhale's Chairman Dennis Curran, the Company introduced a strategic review in 2005, which included the development of the Three Pillar philosophy in pursuit of best in class performance in the areas of Profit, Safety and Environment.

Using Advanced Business Solutions' HR software, the HR team provide Barhale's Board with a number of pre-determined benchmarking reports to help them in their quest of achieving their Three Pillar philosophy.

Sharon comments: *"The report writing tool is so easy to use, providing us with the tools to give the board a very visual representation of how the company is performing in key HR areas and helping them to make informed decisions on the business. Although it is very easy to use I still have the ability to write powerful reports that often include a number of complex calculations. Being able to do "what if analysis" really helps with salary benchmarking and allows the board to see what the impact might be on the bottom line with different salary increase scenarios."*

The future

"One of the key objectives of HR is to increase its professional image within the company and as part of this process, Barhale is looking at the possibility of introducing the self-service software. The number of processes that we could streamline on-line are considerable."

"We hold a lot of sensitive data in HR and the fact that the security in the self-software is completely watertight will give us complete piece of mind. Likewise, being able to determine what access we give employees and line managers is very important."

Sharon continues: *"One of the key challenges facing the construction industry is to retain employees with key skills that are very much in demand now. At Barhale and since the introduction of the HR software we are in a position to manage this challenge successfully."*

"Equally, Barhale is undertaking a vast recruitment drive to attract the right employees with all the necessary skills and experience, plus the character to fit in well with Barhale's culture. We have not really used the Recruitment software to its full capabilities, but the plan is to start now and help us to quicken the recruitment process and to evaluate the success of our recruitment campaigns."

Sharon finishes: *"There are exciting times ahead for Barhale and we look forward to continuing our successful relationship with the company."*

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About Business Solutions

Advanced Business Solutions, an Advanced Computer Software Group plc company, provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. It's award-winning software systems comprise core financial management, procurement, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions . It also provides managed and bureau service options.

Advanced Computer Software Group plc is the UK's leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and commercial sectors. It comprises 3 main divisions and has 7000 customers and 800 staff worldwide.

For more information

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