

Alliance & Leicester plc Ensures Scalability and Flexibility For Future Growth



Alliance & Leicester plc
Leicester, UK
www.alliance-leicester.co.uk/

Industry:

Financial Services

Employees:

5,000-9,999

Oracle Products & Services:

Oracle Assets
Oracle Cash Management
Oracle Financials and Sales Analyzer
Oracle Financials
Oracle Global Consolidation System
Oracle Human Resources
Oracle Support
Oracle Application Server
Oracle Reports
Oracle Discoverer
Oracle Payroll
Oracle Purchasing

Key Benefits:

- Achieved a 50% percent increase in speed of transactions in every area
- Consolidated all human resources, payroll, and financial in a single data store
- Required a limited amount of end-user training

“Processes that once took eight hours to run are now completed in about a quarter of the time, and most transactions in every area are now completed in less than half the time.”

– Jim Bone, Head of Financial Systems and Services, Alliance & Leicester plc

Alliance & Leicester plc (A&L), a major U.K. financial services group, offers a broad range of financial services to personal, commercial, and small business customers. The company converted from its status as a mutual building society in 1997 and has since become a member of the FTSE 100 index of leading shares. A&L aims to provide a comprehensive range of high-quality, competitively priced mortgage, investment, personal banking, and insurance products; cash-transmission services; and corporate banking facilities.

In 1997, A&L replaced several disparate functions with a central administrative department, applied a single set of procedures, and implemented Oracle applications as its standard. “The main thing we liked about Oracle was that it was an integrated system. You only had to make changes once. It improved our reporting capabilities enormously,” said Jim Bone, head of Financial Systems for A&L.

In later years, A&L wanted to continue deriving benefits from the system. For example, it wanted self-service modules and did not want to just bolt them onto its previous version of Oracle applications. In 2002, A&L began a project to upgrade its applications to Oracle11i.

A&L outlined two goals for its Oracle upgrade. First, it wanted to create a scalable platform to facilitate further growth, cost reductions, and flexibility. It also wanted to enable access to its systems via a Web browser.

Immediate Performance Improvement

“As a financial services company, it’s vital that we constantly maintain tight control of our funds and customer transactions, so the continuity and performance of our Oracle system is crucial. The upgrade was a big project, but we successfully delivered on

time and under budget,” said Bone.

A&L noticed immediate improvements in the performance of the system, particularly in the runtime of batch jobs. “Processes that once took eight hours to run are now completed in about a quarter of the time, and most transactions in every area are now completed in less than half the time,” said Bone.

As a result of the Oracle11i upgrade, A&L was also able to resolve outstanding business issues from the original implementation and make changes to the configuration of the system. One of the biggest benefits is the browser-based system that allows anyone on the company network to access software. “We have about 400 users, and the Web-enabled technology allows us to roll out new features very quickly,” said Colin Knowles, Technology Support and Project Implementation manager at A&L.

Why Oracle?

A&L originally chose Oracle from among five other software providers. “We didn’t look for best of breed in any individual area. We wanted the best all-around integrated package, and Oracle offered us what we needed,” said Bone. “We also knew Oracle would keep us abreast of changes in both the technological and business environments, and that is what they are doing through this upgrade.”

Implementation Process

A&L chose to upgrade rather than re-implement to avoid having to reload data. Upgrading meant simply migrating the data. “We only finished implementing our 10.7 system in 1999 and were making good use of the data,” said Bone. “We had a group chart of accounts and didn’t want to lose any of our transaction history, so re-implementation would have been a retrograde step.”

Knowles described the project as a complex upgrade. “When we changed our environment from Oracle 10.7 to Oracle11i, we also took the opportunity to change our hardware platform from Sequent Numa-Q to IBM pSeries 690. In addition, we were able to deploy Oracle11i Web-based client access to almost 400 users as a part of the cut-over weekend,” said Knowles.

The upgrade took just over five months. After several major iterations between February and June 2002, the migration took

place at the start of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations on May 31, and was completed by the time everyone returned to their desks four days later. "We're very proud of the fact that we didn't lose any service thanks to the holiday and the rapid implementation," said Bone.

A&L used a third-party service provider to help with the upgrade, and Oracle Support was involved throughout.

Alliance & Leicester plc is a major U.K. financial services group, offering a broad range of financial services to personal, commercial, and small business customers