



Virgin Atlantic chooses a more flexible option

Mokum steps in to help airline upgrade its Oracle applications



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Customer challenge

Virgin Atlantic's plans for a major software upgrade needed reliable and flexible support

Solution

Mokum consultants worked alongside Virgin's IT team, cutting costs

Key Benefits

- Pro-active advice
- Quality, high-speed implementation
- Upgrade already bringing benefits to business

Virgin Atlantic is the UK's second largest airline, flying more than 4.5 million passengers a year. It was founded 21 years ago as part of Richard Branson's Virgin Group and has since won numerous business, consumer and airline industry awards worldwide.

Based at both Gatwick and Heathrow airports, it operates long haul flights between the world's major cities and holiday destinations. Its headquarters and IT operations are based in Crawley, West Sussex, close to Gatwick.

Meeting the needs of the business

Having the right IT applications in place helps Virgin Atlantic operate in the most productive way. Matthew Grove is responsible for back office IT projects delivery and in his role as Project Portfolio Manager ensures Virgin Atlantic's IT capability can meet the changing needs of the business.

“Our attitude to technology investments is that we have to see a clear benefit for the business before making a financial commitment,” he says. “Change for change's sake is not a business benefit. With the example of our upgrade we identified that we could reduce costs and improve our efficiency, so the decision to proceed was taken.”

Virgin Atlantic has been using the Oracle E-Business Suite to handle all of its back office functions for some time. This includes its main transaction system, covering supplier payments and the whole range of financial transactions, as well as the various HR processes, from recruitment to payroll.

Time to upgrade

The company was using version 11.5.8 of the Oracle suite and recognised it was time to upgrade, particularly as the new version had been on the market for a while and Virgin Atlantic was keen to utilise its new features.

The traditional upgrade path results in a sizeable project – a view that was reasonably and successfully challenged by Matthew Grove and his team. Critical to getting this approach authorised was a decision to reduce the scope of the upgrade and an emphasis on reduced system downtime.

Matthew therefore searched for a flexible and responsive supplier with a lower cost option than the original plan.

A call was made to Mokum, a specialist company that works with Oracle applications, and a consultant was on site the next day. The joint Mokum-Virgin Atlantic implementation team then got down to the detailed planning.

High-speed implementation

The project plan was revised, with Mokum specialists suggesting various changes to save time and cut costs. The scale of the project was reduced, and five test iterations were cut to three on Mokum's advice. This enabled the upgrade to be implemented within 12 weeks, complying with Virgin Atlantic's programme plan.

A Mokum database administrator worked on site with two Mokum developers to get the project moving, and then spent several weeks working remotely, due to the long hours involved. At one stage, over Christmas and the New Year, they worked around the clock to ensure deadlines were met.

"What really impressed us," says Grove " was that Mokum didn't just follow instructions blindly. They were very pro-active in coming forward with their own ideas. They knew our objectives and came up with suggestions to make it easier and quicker."

"It's quite a big jump to go from the 11.5.8 version to 11.5.10, so it was good to work alongside people who are experts in their field," adds Grove. "The implementation went really well, and we have now been able to move forward and take advantage of the new features for various parts of the company.

"It was a very last minute decision to call Mokum in, but it was a good choice. They were able to offer more flexibility to fit in with our needs and we also built up good working relationships with them during the project. The quality of their work was excellent, they were speedy and responsive and we all enjoyed working with them."

Highly-valued skills

The initial upgrade brought in like-for-like applications, and Virgin Atlantic has since gone on to add greater functionality, made possible by upgrading to the new release. This means the IT projects delivery team has been able to enhance various transaction processes.

Upgrading cleared the system of any bugs and malfunctions and this new version is fully supported by Oracle for the next few years.

"I know we made the right decision in calling in Mokum," concludes Grove. " The team brought some highly-valued skills into the project and I would certainly recommend that Virgin Atlantic use them again."



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About Mokum:

Mokum is an Oracle consulting and support business based in London's Docklands. Mokum offer high-quality services to large organisations that have selected Oracle as their strategic ERP system. Mokum's services include enhancements, upgrades and support encompassing all areas of the Oracle E-Business Suite.

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7536 9962

Email: marketing@mokum.com

Web: www.mokum.com

