SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT UPGRADES BUSINESS PLUMBING WITH SAP S/4HANA

Source: South Florida WMD SOUTH FLORIDA WMD

The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is a regional governmental agency that manages water resources in the southern half of Florida, including sixteen counties from Orlando to the Florida Keys and nine million residents.

Infosys Public Services, a US-based subsidiary of Infosys, helps federal, state and local, and non-governmental organizations become more connected and agile by renewing existing systems and building new digital capabilities.

Despite a worldwide pandemic and an oncoming hurricane, the two companies successfully upgraded the agency's legacy SAP system.

A FAMILIAR TALE OF SOFTWARE OBSOLESCENCE

The SFWMD story is certainly not unique. SAP ERP Central Component (ECC) was SAP's flagship product before 2015. It was a collection of modules that covered the gamut of business applications from logistics to finance and HR. All the modules were customized and linked through your database of choice. SFWMD ran the Oracle database on Solaris, with the last major upgrade performed in 2009!

As you can probably guess, the whole system had a progressively worsening impact on business operations. As the data increased, the database grew, and the performance degradation reached a point where it was negatively impacting the business.

Then along came the perfect storm to force change. SAP has a mandate to phase out all ECC systems by 2027, and the license agreement with Oracle was expiring with a high cost to renew.

ESTABLISHING A NEW FOUNDATION TO BUILD THE FUTURE

SAP S/4HANA was released in 2015. For those unfamiliar with the world of SAP, S/4HANA runs on HANA, which is an in-memory database. Intended initially for data mart and data warehousing, it is now an all-in-one data platform that manages analytical, transactional, and app development. This migration allowed SFWMD to jettison the Oracle database and the impending licensing costs and transition from Solaris to Linux.

SAP S/4HANA is designed to handle more complex problems and manage more data than SAP ECC. SAP S/4HANA can be run on-premises and in the cloud. SFWMD opted to stay on-premises, at least as a first step.

With HANA's in-memory computing database infrastructure, analysts don't have to waste time loading or to write back data. Developers can create and run customized applications on top of HANA.

For those of you relating to this situation very closely, note that SAP plans on terminating its standard maintenance support for SAP ECC in 2027, which will require the transition.

MAKING THE SWITCH WITH MINIMAL DISRUPTION

For most companies, the migration from ECC to SAP S/4HANA is an expensive and lengthy undertaking, often spanning years. SAP introduced SFWMD to Infosys Public Services (IPS) in 2018. IPS assessed how to complete the migration from ECC to SAP S/4HANA with zero downtime for the business.

The agency signed the contract in early 2020 after delays caused by budgetary constraints. The program officially launched in June 2020 and was completed in July 2021.

Infosys has extensive experience with similar migrations and has developed a suite of assets that detail the migration's impact and reduce the migration effort.

Since SAP does not offer tools to address individual customer configuration needs, Infosys developed two core tools to accelerate the migration: [Infosys HANA Code Migration & Optimization (CMO) and Infosys S/4Assist](). IPS leveraged these tools for the SFWMD SAP S/4 HANA Migration program.

CMO analyzes the impact of the migration to the HANA database or SAP S/4HANA simplifications on custom code and recommends remediation for any errors identified. Some errors can be remediated automatically by the tool, with others highlighted for manual remediation. In addition to remediation, CMO also can optimize the performance of the custom code to ensure it leverages the full benefits of the HANA database and SAP S/4HANA.

Some customers have yet to see the business case for the adoption of SAP S/4HANA. IPS has seen clients reluctant even to assess the existing environment in preparation for conversion. Of course, this will change as support for SAP ECC goes away in 2027.

Infosys S/4Assist provides a detailed understanding of the current situation, the scope of the migration effort, and the business case. This tool reduces the typical assessment effort from 2-8 weeks to 4-6 days.

Information gathered from the tool detail the functions of SAP S/4HANA required, along with recommendations tailored to business processes and tasks impacted by the migration, including opportunities to improve operations through the adoption of innovations.

When I spoke with Dinesh Rao, Executive Vice President and Global Head of Enterprise Application Services, Infosys, he said "these tools and Infosys' partnership with SAP are the key differentiators that have enabled us to successfully execute SAP S/4 HANA programs for organizations across different sectors."

WRAPPING UP

SFWMD migrated to the HANA platform without disrupting existing business processes while improving employee productivity.

Just as the migration effort began, Covid-19 reared its ugly head, resulting in the whole program being performed remotely with not one IPS employee onsite in Florida.

You may also remember that in July of 2021, Hurricane Elsa was bearing down on the Florida coastline. IPS proposed a three-day weekend to make the switchover of the systems. SFWMD was preparing for the emergency to shut down the whole facility and the field operations. IPS faced the challenge of cutting over to the new system before the hurricane hit or waiting months afterward. IPS successfully cut over to the new system before the hurricane hit. All done remotely. I find this amazing!

I talked to Ronda Albert, IT Bureau Chief, South Florida Water Management District and she mentioned that SFWMD has seen tremendous value from the migration. "Business processes have been significantly optimized, and the user experiences has improved with business applications developed with SAP Fiori", said Ronda. SAP Fiori is a design system enabling customers to build and customize business applications quickly.

But with these stories, I always ask for quantifiable results. Ronda shared that "the agency is seeing data management cycle times reduced by 70 percent with SAP S/4HANA. The in-memory processing proved by SAP S/4HANA has resulted in an average of 10% improvement in application response times, and in some cases, by over 90 percent. With the new upgrade, employees are able to execute transactions quickly and can shift focus to higher-value tasks, resulting in a continued boost in productivity."

But most importantly, the transformation has established a strong foundation for SFWMD. It will become easier for SFWMD to enhance business capabilities in the future and further improve service delivery for its residents.

Note: Moor Insights & Strategy writers and editors may have contributed to this article.

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