

Havas shrinks time to value from acquisitions



Havas Group



By standardizing on a modern Unit4 enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform that was pre-built for professional services organizations, Havas is realizing value from its new agency acquisitions in as little as three months.

Unified, intuitive finance and project management is helping this global communications group to improve client project profitability, charge accurately, and adapt quickly to market change.

Key benefits include:

- Integrated 32 business acquisitions to Unit4, some in only three months
- Improved finance and project visibility and reporting
- Increased inter-agency collaboration and better client experience

Transforming clients' brand performance

Havas Group is one of the world's largest global communications groups, with €2.3 billion revenues (2019) and 20,000 people in more than 100 countries. Havas is organized into three business units: Havas Creative, Havas Media, and Havas Health & Wellness.

The Group has expanded rapidly through acquisition in recent years, bringing together talent in 60 local 'Havas Villages' across the globe. Each Village gathers creative, media, digital, design, and activation talent under one roof, allowing Havas to provide a seamlessly integrated service for clients in each market and internationally.

While this acquisitive strategy has brought a wealth of opportunity, it has also presented new challenges, as Dean Wartell, Director of North American Financial Systems, explains. "As each business was merged into the Havas Group, it continued to use its own separate finance and project system. This made it difficult to perform consolidated financial reporting across the organization. It was also hard to collaborate across agencies on projects, since the data was fragmented and frequently stale."

Havas in the UK began using Unit4 almost 15 years ago, and it was there that Dean and his team turned in search of a solution. "The UK entity was extremely

Industry

Professional Services

Location

New York City, USA

Size

20,000 people in 100+ countries

Product

Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

Challenges

Improve financial visibility and performance, deliver a great client experience, and integrate new business acquisitions at speed.

Key metrics

3 months

Time to integrate acquisitions

32

Agencies integrated into Unit4

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Dean Wartell

Director of North American Financial Systems, Havas Group

pleased with their ERP deployment and recommended we deploy it globally. We had a demo from Unit4 and liked what we saw. The platform is highly flexible and configurable, with minimal coding. The workflow engine is extremely powerful, and it integrates quickly and seamlessly with our third-party systems.”

ERP purpose-built for professional services

The global communications organization has standardized on a people-centric, project-focused Unit4 platform purpose-built for professional services organizations like Havas. It provides intuitive, unified visibility and control over finance and projects across the Havas Creative and Havas Health & Wellness portfolio of Havas Villages.

“Havas now understands the precise financial performance of its people and projects. We can examine how much income is directly generated by our people producing billable hours,” says Dean.

Accurate, timely financial and project data across the business ensures Havas teams are able to bill projects more accurately. They can track income from billable hours, for instance, and accurately plan, budget, and forecast. Moreover, the seamless project insight enables teams to stay one step in front of potential budget issues – ultimately increasing project profitability. Unit4 resource management functionality, integrated with Havas’ global HR system, is also used to track income from billable hours and trace people-related costs.

“When a client briefs us on a new campaign, for example, the account team can prepare an estimate based on the time and materials. Workflow manages this budget approval – including with the client. As the campaign proceeds, we can monitor every adjustment and report both internally and to our clients. Plus, we know when to recognize revenue between the billing cycles,” says Dean.

Standard playbook for integrating acquisitions

This adaptive and intuitive Unit4 platform is also geared to helping the professional services organization be more agile and adaptive. Dean and his team recently completed the 32nd and final legal business entity integration to Unit4. They used a standard playbook to integrate each new agency and decommission its existing ERP system.

“In 2019, we launched seven new companies into the Havas Village network, including moving small agencies from QuickBooks and similar systems, right up to larger agencies that were using PeopleSoft and other large-scale applications. Some integrations were completed in just three months, shrinking the time to value from each acquisition and improving client satisfaction,” Dean said.

Dean cites the process consistency and automated workflow as two of the many stand-out features of the Unit4 platform. “In the past, our legacy systems drove the business processes. Now, we have connected, consistent, best practice processes right across

the agency group, so everyone is on the same page. In terms of workflow, the Unit4 Flexi-fields and Forms functionality are really useful in support of the various work streams.”

This forward-thinking ERP strategy is ultimately helping Havas to better plan and execute global client campaigns. Unit4 is already used in several European countries, enabling a real-time, international view of project data, accurate forecasting and invoicing, and an improved client experience. “We are studying the use of Unit4 Global Projects to extend this inter-agency collaboration,” says Dean. “It’s an exciting prospect, with the opportunity to improve our global campaign outcomes and continue our reputation for great people experiences.”

