

# Customer Success Story

## Scottish Qualifications Authority



## Unlocking business potential with Absoft's SAP® Support

### SAP: Integrated, scalable and efficient

SQA has run SAP®'s ERP 5 business software system since go-live in December 2006. Replacing a mixture of Cyborg and Cedar software, the SAP system was initially implemented for the financial, controlling, HR, payroll and logistics functions. "Our decision was largely based on the fact that SAP offered an integrated system", comments SQA's Senior SAP Administrator, Angela Reilly. "It was also shown to be scalable and efficient."

SQA's core system is currently based at Dalkeith, while its business continuity system is located in Glasgow. The system resides on IBM P Series hardware running UNIX. Around 120 of SQA's 700 permanent staff are SAP users.

### Best value, best all round

After go-live, SQA began to look around for a long term support partner that would help them to realise the capability promised by the new system. Keen to find a support partner who could cope comfortably with its needs, SQA consulted with fellow members of SAP's Scottish Special Interest Group as well as SAP itself to canvas their views and get recommendations. Absoft and several other well established SAP VARs were then invited to bid for the new support contract.

After a formal process of proposal evaluation, the contract was awarded to Absoft. "The functional breadth and technical depth of Absoft's skills were clearly demonstrated", says Angela Reilly. "Their presentation delivery was also very good, and their comfort in talking openly about what they could and couldn't do made us feel very confident."

Angela continues: "We were also very impressed with the feedback we got from the Absoft customers we spoke to and visited. They were obviously happy and content with the level of service they were getting."

SQA's Finance Business Manager, Karen Dinwoodie, adds: "As SQA is a public sector organisation, we are committed to obtaining best value. Absoft was our preferred service provider, and they were strong in both the quality and cost of what they were offering."

### Moving ahead with a clear view

In preparation for taking over SQA's support service in January 2008, Absoft carried out an initial audit. Absoft's Support Centre Manager at that time, Elaine Thomson, explains. "The objective of the audit was to gain a clearer view of how the support contract was going to work - not just in terms of technical scope, but in all respects, such as lines of communication. The main elements were to review SQA's SAP system, and to interview key users to gain a feel for their typical support needs and patterns."

### Customer background



The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is Scotland's national body for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees. The overall aim of the organisation is to manage the qualifications system below degree level, to allow students to fulfil their potential to participate in the economy, society and communities of Scotland.

The qualifications managed by SQA include:

- National Qualifications, including Standard Grade and National Units and Courses at Access, Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher levels
- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/HND)
- Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

SQA is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Scottish Government Schools Directorate, and is primarily funded through qualification entry charges. The Authority has an annual turnover of approximately £60m, and employs around 700 staff at its sites in Dalkeith, on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and in Glasgow.



## Issues fixed, knowledge delivered

Absoft provides second line support under the agreement. Users first contact Angela and her staff, who then decide whether to handle the support request themselves or pass it on to Absoft. The contract has no set end-point, and provides for Ruby level support. This allows for up to 49 hours per month – mainly functional support, but with an element of BASIS assistance.

As Angela Reilly explains, SQA's main use of the support agreement is to resolve technical and process issues. "Much of the first three months of our contract with Absoft was devoted to addressing gaps in system functionality and outstanding support issues", she says. "One case in point was the reporting of pensionable pay in situations where an employee absence had been applied retrospectively over the tax year end. After many months trying to find a resolution, SAP ultimately concluded that this would be a development request. Then Absoft picked the problem up, and they quickly and efficiently provided us with a solution that met our requirements."

For this three month period, SQA took advantage of Absoft's "top-up" option, which enables customers to buy more support hours in any given month, and increased their monthly support allowance to 98 hours.

"What gives us real comfort", Angela continues, "is how Absoft goes further than merely dealing with the issue itself. Other companies we've dealt with just tell you that the problem is fixed. Absoft's consultants explain what they have done, and give us screen-shots if appropriate. As an added bonus, seeing how Absoft has dealt with the issue equips SQA's first line support team to field similar problems more effectively in the future."

If solving the problem involves introducing a new process, Absoft also provides SQA with work instructions on how to operate the process.

## Getting the most out of SAP

Talking about the benefits she feels SQA has gained from deciding to work with Absoft, Karen Dinwoodie clearly feels that what was promised has been delivered.

"It goes beyond technical expertise. Absoft is proactive in suggesting best practice, and we know they provide us with the right solutions." She continues, "With Absoft as our support partner, we've reached the point where I can see that we'll achieve what we originally wanted from our SAP system."

**For more information please call Absoft on +44 (0)1224 707088 or email [info@absoft.co.uk](mailto:info@absoft.co.uk)**



## Developing in partnership

The new relationship involved Absoft becoming SQA's overall SAP partner – not simply its support provider – and Absoft completed a project to implement SAP's Purchase Order (PO) functionality in 2008.

SQA also seeks advice from Absoft on various aspects of SAP. Angela Reilly expands: "We don't hesitate to approach them for advice, because they give honest answers and they don't try to pull the wool over our eyes. Overall Absoft have been doing a really good job, and we're very happy with them."

"Absoft keeps us constantly in the loop, and we have a real relationship with them. That shows through in their timely resolution of issues and handover of knowledge. It's ultimately down to a whole range of factors, from Absoft's flexibility and integrity, to continuity of staff. We find it rewarding to work with a close-knit team you can always reach at the end of a phone."

**Angela Reilly, Senior SAP Administrator, SQA**



**Aberdeen | London | Stavanger**

**T. +44 (0)1224 707088 E. [info@absoft.co.uk](mailto:info@absoft.co.uk) W. [www.absoft.co.uk](http://www.absoft.co.uk)**

**ABSOF**  
SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS