

## GLOBAL MANUFACTURING CLIENT

# Preparing to Move to SAP S/4 HANA & Enhancing Business Continuity for A&F

**“One of our biggest success stories is that we saw our completion rates stay the same as we shifted to working remotely. We didn’t miss a beat, despite everyone suddenly working in a completely new environment. We had a successful virtual close, without introducing very much risk. I think leadership was really surprised at how effectively we were able to close the books remotely.”**

Director of Accounting & Finance

## The Challenge

Prior to late 2019, a global manufacturer relied on two home-grown SharePoint solutions (one for North America, another for Latin America) to manage the balance sheet substantiation process. Staff performed account reconciliations in spreadsheets and attached completed documents to the databases.

“We fall under the shared services organization and the chief accounting office, so we work across multiple ERPs, regions, and countries. We have a lot of volume, a lot of variation, and a lot of people involved in our processes,” says a director of Accounting & Finance.

“With our legacy SharePoint systems, there was no real workflow. SharePoint was just a repository for the documents. And because the entire process was so manual, there were a lot of opportunities for things to go wrong.”

As the manufacturer grew, the manual processes also led to an increasing lack of visibility, difficulties meeting compliance requirements, and concern about internal controls.

### INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

### REGION

Global

### ADOPTION DATE

2019

### ERP

SAP

### NUMBER OF USERS

230

### PRODUCTS USED

Account Reconciliations,  
Task Management

### BUSINESS BENEFITS

Cut reconciliation time to completion in half, maintained processes despite navigating the disruption of the global pandemic, improved accountability, and increased efficiency with automation.

“Management and senior leadership were asking, ‘Why is it so hard to execute our close and controls processes?’” says the director. “We knew that having a homegrown SharePoint site and thousands of accounts, along with hundreds of users and multiple locations, were definitely part of the problem.”

## The Solution

Leadership was on board for improving the quality and efficiency of key accounting processes. However, the director and her team still needed to build the business case for a new solution. “In my first year with the company, I put together a process map checklist, almost in the Six Sigma sense, of how many potential failures we could have in our process if things stayed the same.”

At the same time, the director began learning all she could about technology options, including BlackLine’s solutions for SAP. “We’re an SAP shop, so obviously BlackLine was a front runner in terms of fitting with our technology and ERP landscape. But we still had to show how BlackLine fit into our broader transformation strategy. We were also competing against other IT initiatives.”

While BlackLine’s SAP integration and alignment with SAP was a key element in helping the director build a strong business case, it was the manufacturer’s long-term plans to move to SAP S/4 HANA that clinched the deal.

“Leadership understood that implementing BlackLine now would allow us to address current risks and improve our quality and efficiency before transitioning to SAP S/4 HANA. We knew we had to get a lot of legacy system data cleaned up before we could even think about migrating to a new SAP S/4 HANA or SAP Central Finance environment, especially with our five different instances of SAP and two other ERPs.”

To streamline their BlackLine implementation and meet a tight four-month, go-live timeline, the manufacturer engaged ClearSulting, a management consulting firm focused on finance and process transformation and BlackLine Platinum Partner.

“We chose ClearSulting both for their years of experience and their strong project approach,” says the director. “I also knew that ClearSulting would be able to do a lot of the heavy lifting for us. We had five different instances of SAP that were connecting and going live at the same time. And ClearSulting would enable us to keep staff working on our end-of-year close and still meet our go-live date.”

The manufacturer went live with BlackLine while working remotely in the middle of the global pandemic. “We couldn’t have done it in the timeframe we did with the quality that we have without ClearSulting as our implementation partner. We had a lot of complexity: five ERPs and many nonstandard processes. We were able to lean on ClearSulting’s experience to ensure we were making good long-term decisions.”

In the near future, the director and her team plan to continue expanding their instance of BlackLine. “We are definitely looking at Transaction Matching and Journals, as well as Smart Close. We want to incorporate BlackLine into our broader strategies and everything else we’re doing in the SAP landscape.”

## The Results

### **Cut reconciliation time to completion in half.**

With BlackLine, the manufacturer has reduced time to completion by 50%. The ability to shorten this aspect of the close has been a game changer. “It’s immensely valuable, especially if you’re looking at balance sheet substantiation not as just a ‘check-the-box’ process from a controls and compliance perspective but making sure that what you’re reporting is accurate. It’s also helped with errors: we can find them faster and certainly before the books are officially closed in Japan.”

### **Maintained processes despite navigating the disruption of the global pandemic.**

Like many other organizations, the manufacturer’s accounting and finance teams had to transition rapidly to working from home.

“Having BlackLine was a tremendous help because we went 100% work from home right after we went live. One of our biggest success stories is that we saw our completion rates stay the same as we shifted to working remotely. We didn’t miss a beat, despite everyone suddenly working in a completely new environment,” says the director.

“We had a successful virtual close without introducing much risk. I think leadership was really surprised at how effectively we were able to close the books remotely for the first time ever.”

### **Improved accountability.**

BlackLine has reduced the need for follow up on individual tasks and responsibilities during the close.

“One of our original pain points had to do with audits. We had to babysit the process to make sure that everybody was doing what they needed to do,” says the director. “With BlackLine, alerts are turned on, so everyone gets reminders, and we have real-time visibility of the status and the reporting.”

Currently, more than 2,500 tasks are managed in BlackLine. “The fact is, we can now redirect our efforts to focusing on quality, instead of spending our time chasing people to get the work done. We feel really good about that. And our audit committee is very pleased with the status of our BlackLine project.”

### **Increased efficiency with automation.**

The team is also functioning more efficiently overall, thanks to BlackLine’s auto certification capabilities. “BlackLine told us that our auto-certification rates would continue to grow. We’ve certainly experienced that in a short period of time,” says the director. “We started at 35% and jumped up to 37%. Today, we’re at 40% auto certified.”



BlackLine is the creator and premier provider of Enhanced Finance Controls and Automation (EFCA) software to streamline financial close operations. BlackLine's unified cloud platform and broad range of solutions puts it in a class by itself— a company recognized by Gartner as a Leader in providing both EFCA and Financial Corporate Performance Management (FCPM) software solutions.

BlackLine is designed to automate and control financial close processes for midsize and large organizations, and complement ERPs and other financial systems. The SaaS solution increases operational efficiency, real-time visibility, control, and compliance to ensure end-to-end financial close management, fueling confidence throughout the entire accounting cycle.

More than 2,700 companies around the world trust BlackLine to ensure balance sheet integrity and confidence in their financial statements.



Clearsulting's sweet spot is delivering transformational projects in the office of finance. We do that by not just installing technology, but implementing solutions that address your business challenges. Our industry-proven methodologies, speed, and innovative thinking are designed to drive results and get you working better, faster, and with more control. Using BlackLine's platform as a catalyst, we help finance organizations make the shift to modern accounting so they can be a better partner to the business.