

# CIO Connect Case Study

## Everyone Needs a Trusted Advisor “Tell me what I don’t know”

“Tell me what I don’t know.” That’s basically why any CIO - CxO for that matter - seeks out an advisor, we know we don’t know something and what we don’t know is the piece critical to the success of our project, our business. Smart CxOs seek out advisors; not-so-smart ones, don’t. And that’s why I sought out an advisor. I consider myself to be a smart leader, or at least that I should be one and this is what smart leaders do. Having just signed an agreement with SAP and an SAP consultant, I knew it was time. I was over my head. I could no longer answer all the questions my fellow board members were asking or going to ask. I needed sage advice. Enter CIO Connect and Barbara.

### Our situation

It was September 2012, we just signed one of our largest software agreements with any vendor and this vendor was SAP along with an SAP implementation consultant. Anyone who has participated in this type of software purchase and implementation knows too well the dangers of such a matrix of responsibilities. Coincidentally, around the same time I had been invited to a CIO roundtable being hosted by CIO Connect. After a wonderful evening of conversation, dinner and presentations with Singapore CIOs, I knew I had found my advisory.

A few weeks of negotiations later, I was assigned Barbara, aka Barb. Barb is, in one word, a general. She has seen battles, war, victories and a lot of casualties. She’s rolled up her sleeves, dug in, solved issues, stopped leaders from doing the wrong thing. Now, she shares her wisdom, directly and to the point. Together, we found success and mitigated failure with my SAP configuration and implementation. I now share some of those battle scars with Barb and I am a better leader for it.

### How we worked together

CIO Connect provided their Tailored Advisory Services focused on the execution of the SAP agreement through the first Go Live in our Singapore headquarters. CIO Connect was not involved with contract negotiations, which was a mistake and as part of Barb’s expertise that I did learn throughout the engagement. Barb and I had bi-weekly calls, what I would refer to as ‘sanity calls’, to review the progress and discuss on-going strategy for keeping the team on-task to meet the requirements, goals and milestones of SAP Best Practices. My project manager had bi-weekly calls with Barb to discuss and review the tactical side of the implementation and for leadership and project manager mentoring. Barb was on-site to lead an SAP primer with the finance and HR teams and a ‘future vision’ discussion with our executive team to help them envision what our business was becoming with SAP and our new business and project management processes.

“Together we found success and mitigated failure...”

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We help you & your leadership team excel  
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Barb was based out of the UK at the time, but she was available as though she sat next to me. Her experience and expertise was acknowledged by those who met and worked with her, and in turn, helped strengthen my role as CIO and trusted business partner to each of the business teams involved with the project. As a leader it is important to lead open and honestly. My actions to bring on an advisor for this project demonstrated my leadership strength by acknowledging I did not have all the answers but I had the capability and low ego to find an expert who did. My ability to run the project and resolve issues was supported by Barb and her insight.

## Resolving 'challenges' together

And there were issues to resolve. As I said, the matrix of responsibilities in an SAP configuration and implementation are very complex. There is SAP itself, who control the licensing and use of their software and the contained data very tightly. Anytime we wanted to exchange data between SAP and other systems, we had to refer to the SAP licensing team (and then verify with Barb). SAP, the company, understands the importance of data and very carefully controls how data is allowed to enter and exit their software. And for every SAP configuration the rules will be different based on the SAP modules being used and how the licensing contract is negotiated. Barb and I spent many of our calls reviewing licensing and data.

At the end of the first stage of SAP Best Practices know as Business Blueprinting, we, myself and my project manager, were faced with our first significant decision that would impact time and budget. We knew our Business Blueprint was not complete enough for the schedule to continue. We knew we needed to add an additional month and have the business team redo a majority of the work they had already done. It was during my call with Barb that I was able to truly understand what should have been completed compared to what we completed. Our implementation consultant was also warning us that the blueprint was not complete enough, but they were not warning us as significantly as they should have. With Barb's guidance, I was able to confidently direct the team, us and the consultants, that we would add an additional 30 days to revisit the key areas that were not completed thoroughly. The significance of the end of the Blueprint phase is the business owners review and sign off on committing to the document and that no changes will be made. For us, the business owners were the members of the executive board and each was personally vested in this project. By signing off on this document, they were agreeing that this is how they run their business. In the end, even though this added an additional 30 days, the blueprint was now completed correctly and we were able to make up a majority of those 30 days later in the schedule because we had collected and described our business processes very accurately and correctly.

Throughout the process we learned that our teams lacked a good understanding of project management and business information systems. Working with Barb, the executive board and HR, we addressed possible ways to educate our teams. A core part of our business services is project management and as an outcome we decided to implement Lean Project Management. The core concepts of Lean married well to our blueprint for SAP's Project Systems module. As our project managers were becoming certified in Lean, they had a toolkit which supported Lean methodology and saw their career path being supported by the executive board.

## The outcome – success

By our first Go Live (we had 3, one in each financial center - Singapore, Bangkok and Bangalore) the core internal SAP team understood the difference between getting it right and getting it wrong. Our Singapore Go Live went well and we were ready to go to the next location, Bangkok, where we would be repeating the Business Blueprint and adding the context of Thailand - language, both non-English and character-based alphabet, and Thailand's financial rules and regulations - ERP is all about finance. The guidance and insight our team and I received from Barb and CIO Connect gave me the needed strength and understanding to answer this new next set of questions, which is, after all, why you seek out an advisor - not to do it for you, but to impart wisdom upon you.

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CIO Connect helps organisations exploit technology, working with and through their internal technology teams. Our areas of expertise are:

- Strategy
- Leadership
- Governance
- Business Value

For more information about us, including getting CIO Connects Daily Intelligence, please contact us on +65 9459 4770 or email [Singapore@cio-connect.com](mailto:Singapore@cio-connect.com).

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