The importance of compliance in a heavily regulated world

In today's increasingly pressurised environment, one of the biggest risks for any organisation is failing to comply with regulatory requirements. The penalties can be severe and long-lasting, both in financial terms and to a company's reputation.

Compliance is critical to ensure that employees and companies as a whole abide by internal rules of conduct and external rules and regulations. A vital component of organisational effectiveness, especially in the not-for-profit sector, is ensuring that you are legally compliant. This involves not only knowing the legislation that applies to your organisation inside out, but also being able to demonstrate compliance evidentially, by keeping records up-to-date, having policies and procedures in place, and evidencing that stakeholders are taking their compliance responsibilities seriously.

About the RSPCA

The RSPCA, headquartered in Sussex, was founded in 1824. It's now one of the UK's largest charities, with an income of £140 million and over 1,600 employees. It has a large network of regional offices, 30 animal homes, hospital and clinics, and a team of uniformed inspectors on the streets. The RSPCA has to investigate over 150,000 complaints of animal cruelty and neglect every year.

All of the RSPCA's income is raised through voluntary donations, legacies and memberships and fundraising with corporate partners. The Council of the RSPCA is committed to the very highest levels of governance and making sure that it is held to financial accountability.

Keeping up with the times

Many of the RSPCA's financial and administrative processes had become outdated. Like many older charities, processes had evolved by default, not design, and there was a gap between how they were working operationally and meeting current best practices. It also needed to have greater security, clarity and leverage over its data.

The RSPCA needed a secure, robust solution with longevity that would enable it to take control of the business, so that it could focus its resources on animal welfare and not administrative processes. By shifting the finance team away from transactional processing, the RSPCA realised that it could add tangible value to the organisation.
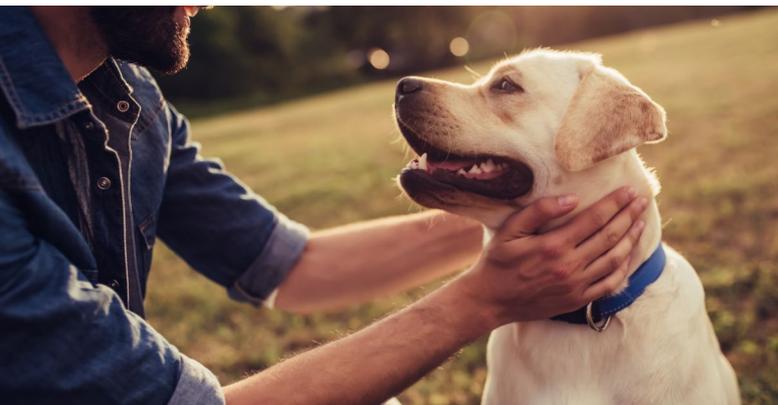
Choosing the right partners

At the start of 2014, the RSPCA went through a competitive tendering process for an up-to-date Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, to enable it to merge all of the important operations such as payroll and manufacturing, and integrate data across all of the organisation's functions, making the entire system easier to manage and audit.

It also required an ITIL framework, which is a methodology for managing IT as a service, based around a five-phase service lifecycle: service strategy, service design, service transition, service operation and continual service improvement.

RSPCA undertook a structured and controlled selection process. Sage was a strong contender in the tender process - not only is it the market leader in ERP systems, it was a known entity to RSPCA, having provided its legacy finance system. It was evident early on that Sage Business Cloud Enterprise Management was the right solution for its needs. One of the main benefits was that Enterprise Management would allow the RSPCA's central teams to fulfil a more service-led function to the large branch network.

Consultative approach to best practice

Another critical element in the tender process was the role assigned to Sage's partner, CPiO, one of the UK's leading experts in IT software and deployment solutions. CPiO had worked with the RSPCA before and really understood its organisational goals and aims for its end system.

CPiO was excellent at challenging and questioning some of the RSPCA's established processes and methods, helping it establish how to get the most out of a modern ERP solution. CPiO demonstrated to the RSPCA what the Sage software could achieve and it was clear that Enterprise Management met all of RSPCA's objectives.

The RSPCA required a plug-and-play cloud-based solution that it could configure to specific requirements, whilst still supporting best practices. As well as fitting in with its 'digital first' approach, the Enterprise Management cloud solution meant that the RSPCA didn't have to heavily invest in IT infrastructure. CPiO provided invaluable support, helping to create a collaborative project team made up of technical/business project managers and subject matter experts, who all worked together to make sure the right results were achieved for the RSPCA.

In addition to the core financial management modules for invoicing, payments and the usual checks and balances, the RSPCA chose to implement two additional modules. 'Sage Enterprise Intelligence' gives intuitive real-time data reporting that makes it quick and easy to get relevant business insights (and ensures a consistent data view for everyone). In addition, 'eDocument Management' allows an electronic copy of an invoice to be stored with a transaction, keeping information together and removing the need for paper copies.

Fulfilling compliance objectives

Sage Business Cloud Enterprise Management is a modern system that can integrate and analyse large amounts of data, which in turn can be easily scrutinised and audited.

The Sage solution was deployed in July 2017, delivered on time and within budget, and the benefits have quickly spread across the business. The RSPCA has already seen a 20%-40% increase in efficiency by moving from a traditional system of paper invoices and old-fashioned date stamps to scanned invoices.

With the software available on any device, with secure two factor authentication, RSPCA's commercial teams can benefit from Enterprise Management anywhere, on any device. The quick and simple integrated data analysis also helps the commercial team to generate better forward planning.

Another key aim of the new system was faster financial closing, particularly at year end, to ensure it had the data insight earlier in the system processes. The timetable and schedules are more clearly visible across the organisation and even the auditors have seen a positive difference. The RSPCA now has better data insight and can respond with much greater agility to their requests for information.

Fewer invoices and less paper has reduced the finance teams' workloads and administration costs, and there is a more consistent approach to processes across the team, which allows for more flexible, collaborative working.

Add tangible value to your business

Sage and CPiO are in a long-term partnership with the RSPCA. It chose Enterprise Management to ensure it had an auditable, secure and future-proofed solution that will adapt to its evolving needs.

The RSPCA is already planning the next phase of its ERP project, to extend its cloud-based solution to cover the RSPCA's fixed assets (including all its properties and vehicles) and procurement processes.

It's imperative that compliance measures are put in place, whether you are part of a small not-for-profit organisation or a much larger, international charity. Being transparent with your data controls and open and honest with your supporters about what you are going to do with their information and donations will stand you in good stead when dealing with governance and compliance issues.

The RSPCA has invested in the thorny topic of compliance and now has the peace of mind knowing that it is financially accountable. It is 100% committed to future-proofing its organisation with compliance best practice – **are you?**

Why not find out how we can help you?

CPiO's cloud solutions, partnering with Sage, mean that you can finally have the best of both worlds: the flexible deployment models mean that there is no 'one-size fits all'.

Whatever option you choose, CPiO offers the utmost flexibility in how you decide to position your business - as well as your people - for success.

Call us on 0344 880 6140 for more information.
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