

Case Study

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The Sweet Success of Florida Crystal's SAP Cloud Migration

Florida Crystals worked with managed service provider Lemongrass to migrate its SAP systems to AWS. Gain insight into this SAP cloud migration project.

Karen D. Schwartz | May 11, 2023



that all the water used in sugar processing comes from the sugarcane itself. The company also uses a biomass power plant to convert its sugarcane waste into energy.

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And for a company that depends largely on agricultural resources, Florida Crystals uses an impressive amount of technology behind the scenes. Operations are anchored by a decades-old SAP system, which has helped the company grow to 8,000 employees and diversify into other businesses. Today, the company's subsidiaries include Florida real estate firm FLC Landlord LCC and sustainable packaging provider Tellus.

Considerations for SAP Cloud Migration

Florida Crystals' team has upgraded its SAP implementation over the years, first putting it in data centers and then a [virtual private cloud](#) with VirtuStream (now a subsidiary of Dell Technologies). The company has kept up with SAP developments: It became one of the first companies to move to SAP HANA when it was released in 2011 and SAP HANA S/4 when it was released in 2015.

By 2018, Florida Crystals used SAP HANA S/4 version 1709 in a virtual cloud for about 80% of its business operations. Kevin Grayling joined the company as vice president and CIO at that time and sought to further modernize the SAP implementation. Florida Crystals had ended up with three separate instances of SAP in different areas, which Grayling aimed to consolidate. Moreover, Grayling believed that VirtuStream, the cloud provider hosting the SAP implementation, hadn't kept up with the company's needs, so he proposed to move SAP to the public cloud.

"We had an old ECC [ERP Central Component, the legacy SAP platform for versions before S/4 HANA] from one of our businesses that was also the virtual cloud but on an older SAP platform. We also had an SAP instance in the public cloud in our Belize operation, which is a raw sugar milling and trading company," Grayling explained. "I saw an opportunity to consolidate those, plus our main SAP implementation, into one in the public cloud."

Grayling's team conducted a study to evaluate two options: either to replace the three SAP instances with one in the public cloud, or upgrade to S/4 HANA 2020 and move the two smaller instances into the S/4 HANA environment. After the evaluation, the team chose the former option because it would lead to improved efficiencies and cost savings by having all processes on one system. It would also

“Public cloud data centers, even though they are cloud-based, are run more efficiently in terms of greenhouse gasses and carbon footprint, and that’s important to us.” come a Data Hero? Learn From DevOps



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After deciding to move to the public cloud, Florida Crystals had to [choose a public cloud platform](#).

The team considered Azure, Google Cloud, and AWS, along with SAP RISE, which Grayling considered too new at the time.

Florida Crystals IT team had previously partnered with Lemongrass, a managed services provider (MSP) that specializes in SAP and AWS. That partnership helped sway Florida Crystals to [adopt AWS](#).

Florida Crystals entrusted Lemongrass with overseeing the AWS migration project. In January 2021, Lemongrass completed the migration from VirtuStream to AWS. Soon after, Florida Crystals upgraded from SAP S/4 1709 to 2020, which provided new features like the ability to perform analytics functions during the process itself, rather than in a separate data warehouse.

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Lemongrass then spent eight months – from February to September of 2021 – consolidating the other two SAP instances into the public cloud infrastructure and migrating Florida Crystal’s SAP Extended Warehouse Management System into the environment.

 **lemongrass** tech

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Along the way, the Lemongrass team implemented three AWS products: Amazon CloudWatch for monitoring, Amazon EC2 for virtual machines, and Amazon Elastic Block Storage for database and application servers. In addition, the team ported Florida Crystal’s storage and backup and recovery system to [Amazon S3](#), where snapshots are taken every 24 hours.

Altogether, the project took about 15 months to complete.

More Upgrades to Come

Grayling said Florida Crystals is reaping benefits from its public cloud journey. The money saved from the migration has been reinvested into upgrading decades-old refineries and [automating employee processes](#).

While this project has ended, Lemongrass remains in the picture. As an MSP, the company runs Florida Crystal's SAP implementation, does troubleshooting and maintenance, and implements changes as needed.

Florida Crystals isn't yet done upgrading its technologies. Next, the company plans to digitize its commodity trading, a project that will be just as involved as the SAP migration.

"As a commodity company, you need to do two things much better than your competitors: how you acquire the raw materials and how you service the customer," Grayling said. "That's why we're currently digitizing everything from how we buy tens of thousands of tons of raw sugar [and] transport that raw sugar from the mill to the refinery to how we hedge some of the risks of our contracts and derivative trades. We're working to take the manually intensive processes out."

About the author



Karen D. Schwartz is a technology and business writer with more than 20 years of experience. She has written on a broad range of technology topics for publications including CIO, InformationWeek, GCN, FCW, FedTech, BizTech, eWeek and Government Executive.