Procon

Cloud based ERP delivers visibility in a volatile market

About Procon

Procon is a North American mining contractor that provides an entire range of start-to-finish mining services throughout the world. The Burnaby, British Columbia-based company's ability to finance, build and operate the most complex open pit and underground mining operations makes it a global industry leader.

When owners predicted an upsurge in business, Procon responded by updating to SAP and moving to the cloud.

Like any piece of equipment, computing systems need constant maintenance to keep doing what they need to do everyday. But sometimes — whether it's a heavy excavator or complex IT hardware — age usurps usefulness and it just has to be replaced. Today, Procon runs its SAP applications in the cloud and everyday business happens like a well-oiled machine.

"In a downturn, customers expect us to drive down our pricing. So, it was important for us to track and manage costs much more closely to remain competitive."

AL HARKNESS
IT Manager, Procon

Results

- A scalable SAP environment poised for growth
- A stable ERP infrastructure for global availability
- Keen insight into costs and business processes
- Greater peace of mind
- Application management solutions from Illumiti
- Infrastructure management services from Sungard AS

Services

- **Cloud Services** — for production, development, database and operating system environments
- SAP ERP applications for finance, human resources, purchasing, project control and sales and distribution
- VPN connections to the **Sungard Availability Services®** (Sungard AS) cloud

Procon

The Challenge: An aging infrastructure

After 20 years of service, Procon's legacy ERP system simply couldn't keep up. With a large fleet of equipment to track, a workforce scattered across some of the most far-flung and inhospitable regions on the planet, and new ownership potentially pushing workload volumes and availability demands even higher, it was time for a change — especially considering the need for tighter cost control over projects.

"The resource sector is very volatile and, at the time, it was in the doldrums," Al Harkness, IT Manager at Procon, explains. "In a downturn, customers expect us to drive down our pricing. So, it was important for us to track and manage costs much more closely to remain competitive."

The Solution: A scalable cloud for SAP

Illumiti, an Ontario-based SAP Platinum Partner, implemented the SAP modules for Procon and now takes care of on-going application management. With a strong Canadian presence — and a cloud infrastructure fully certified to run SAP solutions — Illumiti partnered with Sungard AS to stand up the environment within a week.

They did so, ahead of schedule, and the SAP solution went live in the Spring of 2014. Going beyond a rack-and-stack approach, Sungard AS monitors and manages the infrastructure, network, firewall and operating system.

This is a big relief to Henry Wulkan, Senior Project Manager at Procon. "Sungard AS looks after the virtual machines and I don't need to worry about them," he says. "We just open a ticket and they handle the system patching for us, coordinating with our Illumiti SAP team. If an issue arises, I can call a single point of contact and have them jump on a project almost immediately. Instead of hiring people to manage the infrastructure, we have a broad spectrum of people to rely on."

The Benefits: Business insight, global availability

At one time, some low- or no-bandwidth job sites were so remote, miners faxed their timesheets — sometimes scribbled on napkins or scraps of paper — to headquarters. Others emailed. Today, time reporting is automated and global, as workers interact with the SAP system themselves.

"We now have a stable ERP system with 99.9 percent uptime that is widely available to everyone who needs it," says Harkness. "Because the Sungard AS data center is online virtually all of the time, our SAP applications are easily accessible, even to our remote sites."

Since financial data flows securely into cloud systems straight from the field, Procon has greater insight into project costs and can stay abreast of production budgets to make adjustments on the fly. "Compared to our old system, the cloud is much more robust, so we can crunch the numbers easier and faster, and we have more confidence in the results," Harkness says.

Procon also has visibility into other key information, like equipment maintenance costs and operating hours, along with material requisitions and approvals. Automated processes lead to more accurate data. "It's all electronic now," Wulkan confirms. "With less people touching the data, there are fewer errors and less data sources for me to worry about."

Sungard AS also updated Procon's firewall and managed a domain migration. "They did everything from building the machines and coordinating efforts with Illumiti to migrating live data and cutting over to the new domain," reports Wulkan. "It was practically seamless."

Looking ahead, the greatest cloud benefit is scalability. "As we venture into the United States, we can react much faster to growth," Wulkan continues. "Our ability to scale up cloud resources is a simple process, since we can go to a web portal and get more CPU and RAM in an instant. Spreading internationally also requires strict security measures. Having Sungard AS there means they can deal with the security headaches for us."

Considering the success of the past two years, Harkness adds: "I would absolutely recommend Sungard AS to other companies. They provide me with a hands-off solution that lets me make better use of my time. With the monitoring and resources they have in place, we have more eyes on the systems, which gives me greater peace of mind. They've definitely earned two thumbs up from me."

Connect with Us