

Case study

Unleashing HR system and employee potential for Ainscough.

A Zellis system review uncovered huge financial and time saving opportunities for the HR team at Ainscough Crane Hire.





Revolutionising Ainscough HR: From manual workarounds to system optimisation

Ainscough Crane Hire is the market leader for lifting solutions and services to the infrastructure, construction, power generation, and industrial markets.

Having started out in 1976 as a small company with just a couple of cranes, Ainscough has since grown to now having a fleet of around 400 cranes of varying sizes from 40 tonnes to as big as 750 tonnes.

Whether lifting barges out of canals or working on HS2 and everything in between, Ainscough provides support to many areas of the UK, as well as being a critical provider to keeping the UK water, rail, electricity and gas infrastructures running.

With 800 employees, including 650 crane operators, there is a mix of salaried and contracted workers and management who are all looked after by Darren Thompson and the rest of the Ainscough HR team.

In this case study, we look at the journey that Ainscough and Zellis have taken together, with a particular focus on 2024 and beyond, when a Zellis system review changed everything.





An outdated system with manual workarounds

Zellis system review highlighted where Ainscough could make their HR system work smarter not harder

Before the system review in 2024, Darren was acutely aware that Ainscough were underutilising their Zellis system.

Having carried out all their own internal training, and not taken advantage of the support available to them until that point, they had created a lot of manual workarounds that didn't reflect the capabilities of the system.



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“Our team had moved on since 2013 when we first set up the system, and the people who originally configured it weren't around anymore. So as things moved on and new features were added, we just weren't using them. Instead, we were sticking a plaster over things or creating a manual workaround for functions we knew we needed. It was only when we had the Zellis system review that we had that light bulb moment. We suddenly realised the system could do so much more to reduce our workload.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire



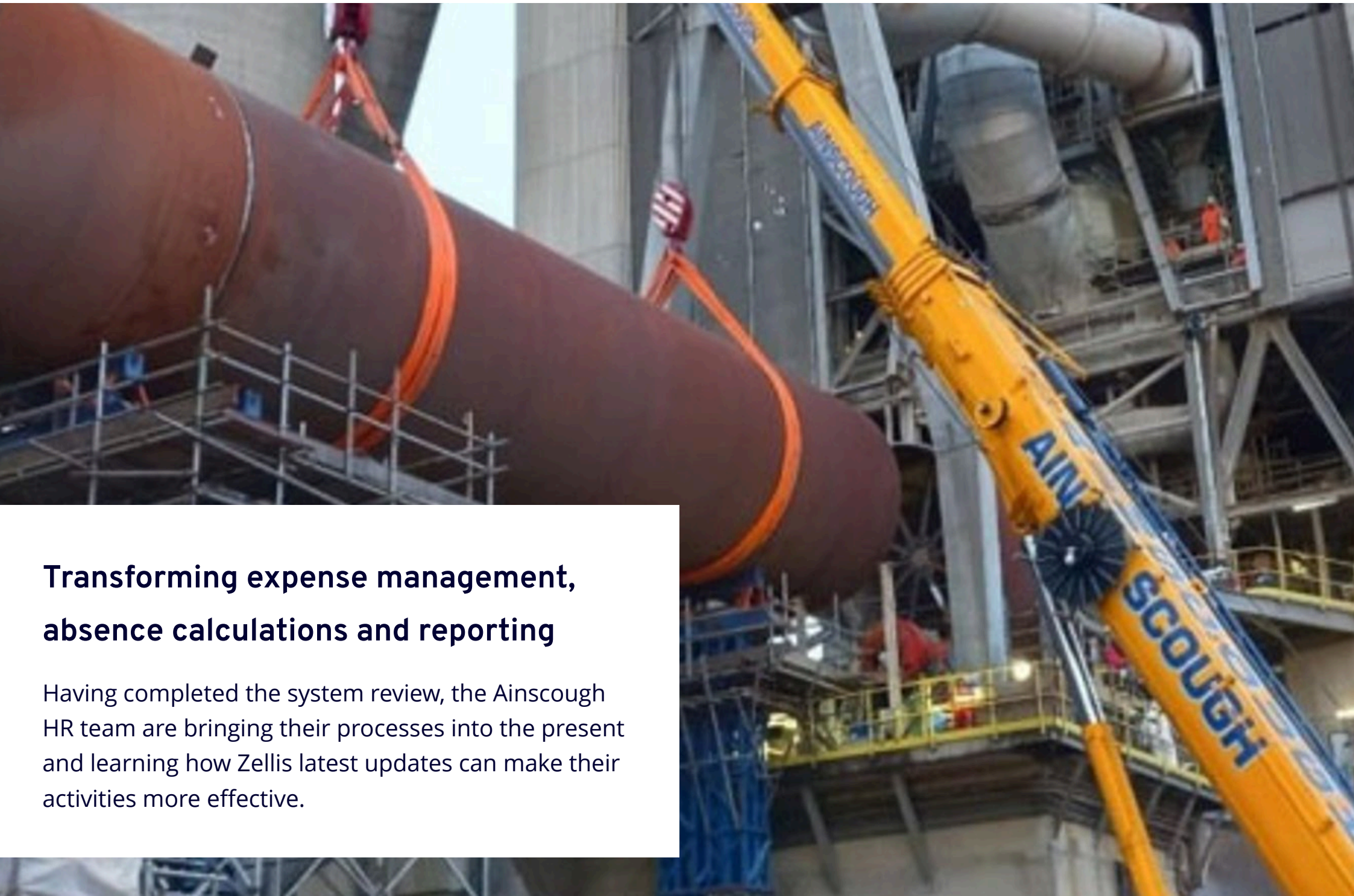
The system review gave Darren the chance to discuss Ainscough in detail with Zellis Customer Success Managers, Hannah and Ashley.

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“We covered where the business is going in the next few years, what our strategy is, and Hannah and Ashley were able to explain how the system could work alongside us to help us achieve our goals. We realised that there were a lot more opportunities in the system than we first thought!

I genuinely believe that Zellis cares about helping us as a business to succeed. It’s not just about sales, it’s actually a genuine interest in us as a business. For me it feels much more like a partnership as opposed to a supplier customer arrangement.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire



Transforming expense management, absence calculations and reporting

Having completed the system review, the Ainscough HR team are bringing their processes into the present and learning how Zellis latest updates can make their activities more effective.

Expense management

Expense management for Ainscough has always been a very manual process involving emails, paper receipts, photographs of receipts which all had to be sent to various team members for reconciliation. This could lead to payment delays when pieces of information went missing or weren't checked on time.

The Zellis team quickly highlighted that Ainscough could manage expenses through MyView, with individuals adding their expenses to the app, including all supporting documentation, which could then be easily reviewed by managers. "This really saves time, makes sure that everything is in order and gives us confidence that expenses are paid accurately. We also have a very clear record of why those expenses were paid," said Darren.



Absence Calculations

Maintaining an outdated setup and not updating the system to reflect changes meant that the team would have to use a calendar to manually work out how many days leave someone had and how many days pay for paying sick pay or maternity pay. This also meant that a separate spreadsheet was required for working out average holiday pay.

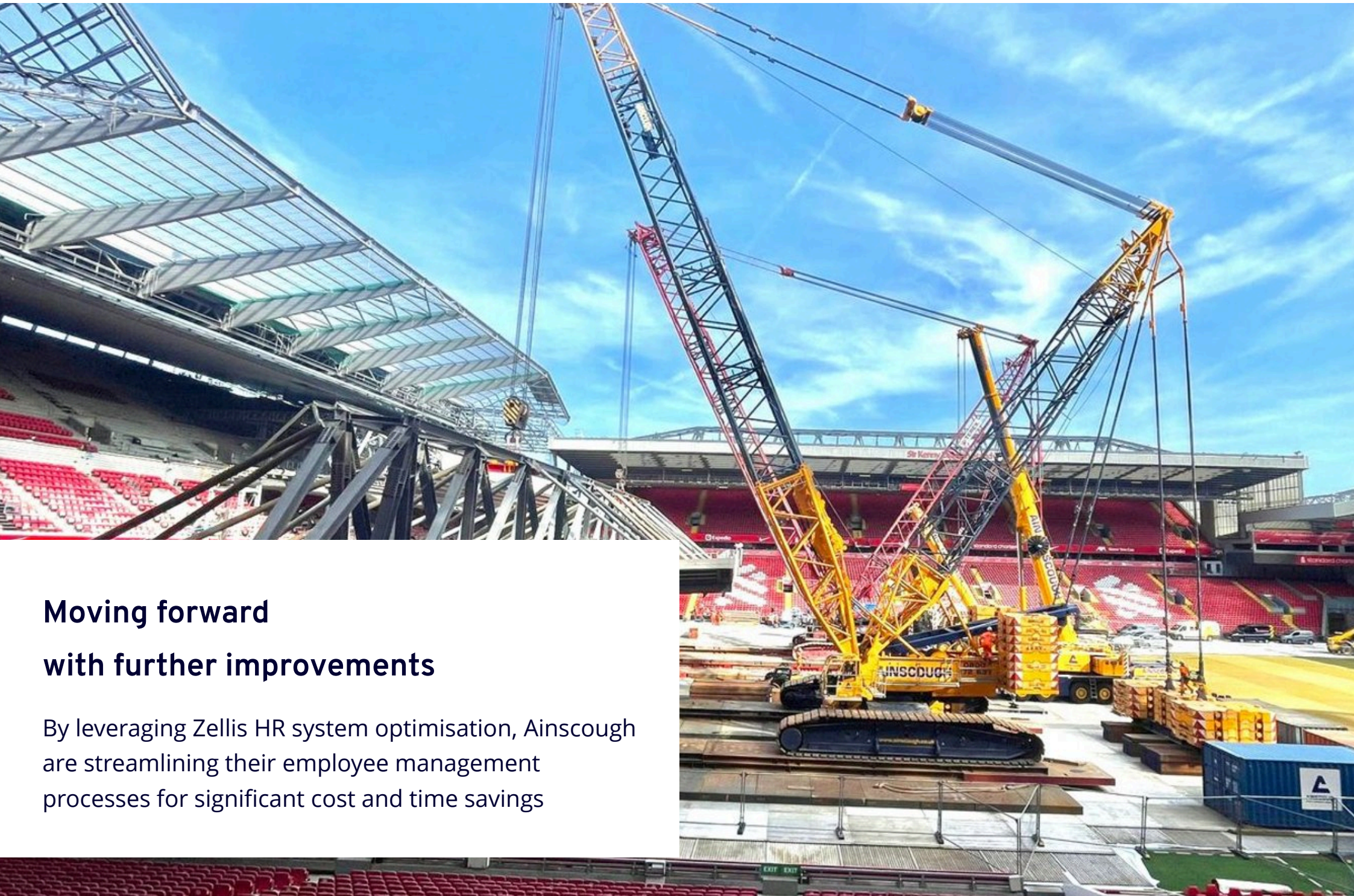
Utilising the potential of their system will also reduce the number of man hours Ainscough's holiday purchase scheme takes.

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"For the last six years that we've run this scheme, we've had to go into 800 records individually and manually adjust holiday entitlements, but we now know that the system can do this for us.

In hindsight we keep asking ourselves why didn't we question whether these were part of the system? Of course they are!"

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire



Moving forward with further improvements

By leveraging Zellis HR system optimisation, Ainscough are streamlining their employee management processes for significant cost and time savings

Reporting

Ainscough are keen to implement further ideas from their review, in particular BI as a service.

While they are currently using the reporting tool in ResourceLink, the HR team finds it a heavily manual process to draw and report on data such as absence rates, employee turnover, gender pay, and demographics.

The transfer to HCM and Power BI means that the team can now create dashboards that present that information in real time, and drill down into any area or to a particular manager for specific live information rather than the cumbersome manual processes they previously used.

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“We also use Power BI through our ERP system for booking cranes, so I can see not only some of the hard metrics around how we were doing in terms of revenue and crane utilisation, but I can also see some of the people metrics as well, so it's familiar for our managers.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire

As Ainscough further develops their use of Power BI, they look forward to making reporting to the Operations Director and Chief Executive easier and more tailored.



Onboarding

One of the next priorities to come out of the system review is to move Ainscough's onboarding process onto the system.

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“When we looked at the onboarding module, we realised that rather than the paper-based system we have right now, candidates would be able to just go online and provide the information we need.

This means we can engage them more easily throughout the process by offering a video employee handbook for instance.

We would also be able to track the completion of tasks throughout the process. This will give a much more professional edge to the candidate experience which is key since we recruit around 200 people per year.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire

Probation and talent management

Having the review has uncovered even more opportunities to automate existing manual processes going forward.

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Setting individuals up for success during their probationary period is one of them. “We’d like to send out reminders to managers for specific actions throughout a probationary period, to check in and provide updates on the individual’s progress.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire

This would also be useful for performance management in general. Ainscough’s existing performance management tool is being underutilised, the tools available through Zellis systems includes far more than simply capturing objectives and individual progress.

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“We now know that it incorporates things like succession planning and performance potential, this is going to be so useful!”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire



Time and money saved

Like many companies, Ainscough often sends out letters to staff. But with 800 staff members this can add up to £1000 in franking costs alone, not to mention the time and cost involved in printing, folding and stuffing envelopes. Darren and the team are keen to relegate paper letters to the past, and instead send all communications through MyView, which will make things easier, cheaper and faster, not to mention a permanent digital record for staff members.

Now that Ainscough are aware of the potential of their Zellis system and are working closely with their customer success managers, they are saving both time and money, as well as providing a better experience for their staff.

And this growing relationship is what Darren feels makes Zellis stand out as a supplier.



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“We often talk with our customers about wanting to be their key partner. If they are building bridges or whatever it might be, we want them to think first of Ainscough, because they consider us their partner. And that’s certainly how our relationship with Zellis has developed over the course of the last year, it feels much more like a partnership than a supplier and customer.”

Darren Thompson, HR Director at Ainscough Crane Hire

Thank you for reading

If you'd like to find out more about how Zellis can transform your HR processes, get in touch, we'd love to discuss how we can be part of your success journey.

