

# Engineering an agile and innovative future with Unit4



## Buro Happold

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**One of the world’s leading engineering consultancies has standardised on a forward-thinking Unit4 solution, connecting finance and HR data to provide a single, enterprise-wide version of the truth.**

Accurate, complete data is accelerating decision-making and agility worldwide throughout the organisation. Innovations such as complete mobile integration and an innovative digital assistant are also driving a powerful, people-focused user experience, freeing teams to concentrate on engineering projects and strategy – not administration.

Key benefits include:

- Reduced travel and expenses processing time from months to days
- Enabled key business processes to be managed from any device – increasing productivity
- Introduced digital assistance to enhance user experience and optimise efficiency

### Engineering a people-focused future

Buro Happold is an international, integrated consultancy of engineers, consultants, and advisers, operating in 24 locations worldwide, with 60 partners and more than 1,900 employees. Its engineering successes range from the Louvre Abu Dhabi and New Danube Bridge, to Changi Airport and the Dyson Headquarters.

This forward-thinking organisation is continually searching for innovative new ways to serve its clients more effectively and efficiently. And it is this focus on the future that brought Buro Happold to Unit4. The company was an early adopter of Unit4, deploying the best-in-class enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform 16 years ago to help drive agility and business growth in regions as diverse as the U.K., the Middle East, China, and the U.S.

Today, the strategy for Unit4 is similar to the founding goals for the platform: to automate business processes and eliminate process inefficiency, improve data collection, and share real-time reporting across the global organisation. “Unit4 is at the heart of Buro Happold’s business transformation,” says Jaime Everard,

#### Industry

Engineering Services

#### Location

Bath, U.K.

#### Size

1,900 staff in nine countries worldwide

#### Product

Unit4 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

### Challenges

**Provide staff worldwide with timely, accurate, and complete finance and HR data in supported of fast, informed decision-making across any device.**

### Key metrics

**Months to days**

Expenses processing time

**“Unit4 ERP is so adaptive. We can manage all types of expenses and mobile capability enables our engineers to submit expenses out in the field, wherever they are based. By moving expenses management from a manual, labour-intensive system to Unit4, Buro Happold has reduced the expenses ‘entry-to-payment’ time from months to days.”**

**Jaime Everard**

Business Systems Manager

Business Systems Manager. “It puts people at the centre of everything we do, making the company more agile, and enabling transparent visibility across the organisation.”

The ERP platform supports integrated and unified core finance (including accounts payable and the general ledger), project and human capital management. “With streamlined processes and a single source of finance and HR ‘truth’, Unit4 is helping Buro Happold make better decisions about our financials, projects, and people. The platform is perfectly suited to helping the business get where it wants to go, now and into the future.”

A standout feature of the deployment is the Unit4 Travel & Expenses module, which is taking much of the ‘heavy lifting’ out of travel and expenses management. The intuitive, flexible system enables Buro Happold staff wherever they are in the world to register their expense claims online through whichever device they choose.

An engineer waiting at an airport, for example, can open his or her phone, input the expenses associated with the trip, and submit the claim. Automated workflow and policy enforcement controls take care of the approval process, currencies, local legislatures, and other intricacies.

Crucially, no training is needed on Unit4 Travel & Expenses and users don’t need to be familiar with granular details like regulations, rates, or expense account codes, and the entire process is visible in a single page. Once complete,

all travel and expenses claims are visible for dashboard reporting by individual, by project, by business unit, or other criteria.

“I can’t believe we managed so long without Unit4 Travel & Expenses,” says Jaime. “It’s so adaptive. We can manage all types of expenses and mobile capability enables our engineers to submit expenses out in the field, wherever they are based. By moving expenses management from a manual, labour-intensive system to Unit4, Buro Happold has reduced the expenses ‘entry-to-payment’ time from months to days.”

### **Digital assistance accelerates people experience**

Another useful feature is digital assistance. The engineering company uses Unit4 Wanda to bring a conversational interface to its business applications. Available anytime, Wanda automates routine operations, learning from every staff interaction, including preferences and context, to make staff even more productive. This innovative digital assistant is available to staff through Microsoft Teams.

“Wanda is a powerful addition to our absence management,” says Jaime. “For example, you simply tell the app ‘I would like next Thursday off’ and it will verify that request, asking whether you want a half day or a full day. It then orchestrates the tasks surrounding that request, such as updating the calendar and days accrued. In time, we will connect other regular tasks to Wanda, such as timesheets. It’s fast, easy, and very popular with our staff.”

However, it’s the seamless integration between finance and HR that is most fundamentally changing the way Buro Happold operates. Jaime again: “Finance and HR are connected straight out-of-the-box,” he says. “We have a single version of the truth, high quality, trusted data, and that data is available in a secure, shared environment.”

Finance and HR reporting is also accurate, timely, and complete. “Operations can run a report which captures a near real-time snapshot of the business, for agile decision-making. The Finance function can see everything from aged debt and cashflow to budgeting. And HR can view headcount reports and other information to ensure adherence to regulations such as the European Work Time Directive. All of this data is visible in an intuitive, easy-to-use platform,” says Jaime.

Looking ahead, Jaime and his team are set to add additional Unit4 functionality such as Wanda digital assistant service and other solutions. “Unit4 is one of Buro Happold’s most important business and technology partners. It’s a trusted relationship – one that is delivering innovation to our people-centric strategy. The depth of Unit4 functionality, ease of use, and flexibility mean it will remain a cornerstone of our business strategy for many years to come.”