

CASE STUDY

SAGE 200

► ULSTER RUGBY

Sage Business Partner



ULSTER RUGBY ACHIEVES ITS GOAL OF IMPROVED MANAGEMENT REPORTING WITH SAGE 200 FROM PINNACLE



CLIENT PROFILE

Ulster Rugby is one of four professional provincial rugby teams from the island of Ireland and is the biggest organisation running a full-time professional team based in Northern Ireland. Ulster Rugby plays in the European Rugby Champions Cup and Guinness PRO12, and provides the biggest regular supporter numbers for a true 'sport for all' in Northern Ireland.

The organisation's playing and administrative staff is based at Kingspan Stadium in Belfast. The stadium reopened in 2014 after a £15.9 million redevelopment, which transformed it into one of the most modern rugby venues in Europe.





GOING FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE


The refurbished stadium has seen capacity increase from 11,000 to 18,100, and, anticipating this expansion, in 2013 Ulster Rugby began the search for a replacement business system to manage its growth.

Accountant Joanne Hunter recalls, **“We had relied on Sage 50 to run our accounts for some years and the software had served us well, but we knew that expansion would bring increased pressure and a greater demand for management reporting. While recognising that we probably hadn’t exhausted everything Sage 50 could offer us, we took the major decision to move to a system with the scope and scale to accommodate both our known, planned growth and any future business developments.”**

The Irish Football Association, the governing body for football in Northern Ireland also based in Belfast, had made a similar transition in 2011, moving from Sage 50 to Sage 200 to gain improved management reporting and analysis to support its growth.

With similar objectives, Ulster Rugby found the Irish FA a valuable reference point in reviewing its options. Joanne says, **“Audrey Robinson, our Financial Controller, asked The Irish FA finance team about their experience both of Sage 200 and of working with Pinnacle as their Sage Business Partner. She received positive reports on both fronts and this was very reassuring for us.”**

Invited to discuss how Sage 200 could meet the club’s requirements, Pinnacle gave a clear presentation and demonstration of the potential benefits: **“Pinnacle sat down with us and went through line by line to ensure that the system would meet our requirements. It was quite an eye-opener and we were impressed! It became obvious that Sage 200 would offer much more than we’d been used to with Sage 50. It was a good plus for us, too, that Pinnacle had experience of our sector, having done such good work with The Irish FA.”**

The background of the slide is a photograph of a large indoor sports hall. In the foreground, a red running track with white lane markings stretches towards the background. On the right side, there is a wall with a large window and a quote. The quote reads: "...I would rather be an Ulsterman than anything else in the world." The hall has a high ceiling with exposed pipes and lights. On the left, there is a blue structure, possibly a staircase or a wall panel.

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JOANNE HUNTER

ACCOUNTANT, ULSTER RUGBY



A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE

The decision went ahead to purchase Sage 200 Financials and Commercials, with Customer Relationship Management (CRM):

The implementation took place at the Club's financial year end, in tandem with the Finance team's move to new offices within the redeveloped stadium: **"It wasn't exactly the perfect timing to take such a big step,"** comments Joanne, **"but fortunately we had Pinnacle's expert help throughout. Their support team are great and they quickly ironed out any issues that are bound to arise in the early days of using new technology."**

Sage 200 now offers expanded functionality to support the enlarged stadium and the club has achieved its primary goal of improved reporting for senior management. There is better cost analysis according to match type and other group activities, such as the club's thriving Academy arm for developing young talent. Joanne says, **"Managers can see the big picture but also drill down to view actual spend against budget in detail for every part of our business."** The new system has also helped to improve efficiency. Outlining one striking difference, Joanne says, **"Reporting through Sage 200 is easier and saves time – I reckon we've cut in half the time it takes to generate reports and distribute them down to the different departments. There's no double data entry or needing to collate and dedupe data from multiple spreadsheets."**

She goes on to highlight, **"It's not only about doing the same things we did before only far more efficiently; we can help the club's managers in innovative ways, rather than just providing a limited 'set menu' of reports. We ask them, What reports would help you in managing your area of the business? What aspects do you need to keep on top of? This gives managers more control and ownership of their budgets and a deeper level of cost analysis."**



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A REFRESHING EXPERIENCE

The process of refreshing reports has benefited greatly from improved automation, as Joanne explains,

“In the past, if a manager asked for an update of a previously provided report, we had to try to ring-fence an hour in our busy day. It’s so much simpler with Sage 200; we can do the update with the press of a button. What’s more, having accurate and up-to-date information giving a view of the business as it is right now makes it easier for managers to engage with the information.”

It’s still early days for the new Sage 200 system and Joanne says, **“We know there is functionality yet to be explored. For example, adopting the CRM software is still a work in progress for us. But we’ll get there, with Pinnacle’s support and guidance.”**

SOLUTION OVERVIEW:

- A future-proofed solution providing longterm support for the growing club
- Greater automation reduces the administrative burden on the finance team
- Improved control and visibility of departmental budgets
- Increased flexibility means senior managers can receive reports to manage their specific business area
- Professional help during implementation and beyond from Sage Business Partner Pinnacle





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