CARLOS MENESES, CIAT'S IT MANAGER, TALKS ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION SECTORS IN LATIN AMERICA.

SYNOPSIS

Carlos Meneses, an engineer graduated from Universidad del Valle, leads the CIAT Technology Department, one of the most important Agricultural Research Centers in Latin America. Headquartered in Colombia with subsidiaries in Central America, Africa and Asia, CIAT is also part of the CGIAR consortium, a consortium of 15 research centers scattered around the world, whose work is to increase food security, reduce rural poverty, improve health and human nutrition and ensure sustainable management of natural resources.

After 35 years in the organization, and 15 years as a technology leader working with young talents, we have the opportunity of discussing with him about the adoption of different technologies by this type of entities, the challenges they face and the implementation of the ERP software Unit4 Business World (formerly Agresso) in CIAT.

He also talked about the birth of the RUAV network under a collaborative model, the achievement of important benefits for the associated entities and the work carried out with GAIA network of the Basque Country (to which GCON4 belongs) to establish in Valle del Cauca a model of collaborative innovation that generates employment and wealth for the region.

How has the adoption of different technologies in CIAT contributed to the dynamism and facilitation of researchers' work?

CIAT has always been participating in collaborative technology groups (IT Managers), agricultural researchers, and the education sector in Colombia (University Network). From these networks, CIAT decides to participate in solutions research projects to facilitate the work of our researchers and generate a competitive advantage for our institution.

Existing solutions are reviewed, experience and knowledge are shared, pilot groups are created and in this way they decide to adopt technologies where personnel from all the sectors mentioned above are involved.

During this process, many students and university professors have participated in projects worldwide and today many professionals are leading projects that were born in this environment.

What challenges do CIAT and the rest of the research and education entities in Latin America face from a technological point of view?

CIAT and the research entities do need a very good connectivity and availability of processing for their research projects, including advanced networks, as well as having new tools to carry out their work with collaborative groups and management, administration and control solutions of all the projects.

Why acquire an ERP?

The vast majority of institutions in the world are working on projects with clearly defined times and activities, with different funding sources, partners from multiple origins and continuous reviews and controls on the projects. It is thus mandatory to have an ERP that addresses these needs.

What did the implementation of the UNIT4 Business World ERP mean for CIAT?

The implementation of the Unit4 Business World ERP software has brought a series of changes to the institution:

- Better management of research projects.
- Accessibility to the application from anywhere in the world and at any time where our users are located.
- More capacity to analyze information for decision making and much faster.

- Less dependence on the IT department. The processes owners are the main actors in administration, control and the change of business rules.

Which are the points that you consider fundamental for such implementation project to be successful?

The key to success is to have the firm conviction that the process owners and their teams must know their processes and workflows perfectly, have them translated into the software, become the main actor and make a cultural change accompanied by a good change management process, ideally from an external company. Choose a good supplier that supports locally the process of analysis and implementation, offers all the coordination and link with the rest of the systematized processes in the company and guaranteeing compatibility.

In our case, we had chosen GCON4 for the implementation because of its experience in the non-profit sector both locally and internationally. The result has been very satisfactory. It has a team very experienced in this sector, and totally reliable, something very important in such complex projects.

How was RUAV born and how does it contribute to the associated entities?

RUAV was born from the need to achieve joint benefits in training, purchases (economy of scale) and IT solutions for the associated entities. Initially started with the universities and then the opportunity was given to the research institutions. As such, the network has grown with great importance in the region and has great bargaining power with the suppliers.

About RAUV

The RUAV Association is the academic network of Valle del Cauca, Colombia, which integrates 20 institutions for academic and research purposes in the region.

https://ruav.edu.co/que-es-ruav/

About GAIA

GAIA is the Association of Electronic and Information Technologies in the Basque Country, a private and professional non-profit organisation, established in 1983, currently made up of 260 companies that offer products and services in the field of electronics, information technology and telecommunications.

GAIA's mission is to boost the develop and growth in the Electronics-IT and Telecommunications sector, and to favour the assimilation and efficient usage of the sector's technologies, with the aim of collaborating in the development of the Information and Knowledge Society.

http://www.gaia.es/Home.html

About GCON4

GCON4 is an international software and consulting company conducting business in over 20 countries across all 5 continents. As an official Unit4 Partner, GCON4 has global implementation experience in Unit4 Business World across different sectors, industries and languages, with a special focus and expertise in Latin America's market.

GCON4 is also the proud innovator of indispensable tools such as:
- GCON4 MFL: A tool designed to greatly reduce the time to migrate and manage data in Unit4 Business World.
- GCON4 Localizations: Financial and tax localizations for Unit4 Business World in Latin America.
- GCON4 Exchange Rates Loader: A tool designed to automatically update Unit4 Business World with the latest exchange rates.

http://www.gcon4.com
http://www.gcon4mfl.com