



Co-operatives UK Supports Small Businesses with Accounting Seed

In this case study, we feature Co-operatives UK, a 150-year old trade association dedicated to helping businesses owned and controlled by their members in the UK. Co-operatives UK was utilizing Sage Financials in their Salesforce Ecosystem to manage their back-office before switching to Accounting Seed. We speak with Michael Shepherd, Head of Finance, about his experience with Accounting Seed and how the platform has benefitted the organization in more ways than one.



WHY READ:

- Learn how Accounting Seed enables a trade association with over 800 members to manage all of their members' needs and thrive in the UK.
- Gain insight into how Co-operatives UK was using Sage Financials and how it compares to the innovation of Accounting Seed.
- Learn how Co-operatives UK handles their VAT Return and complies with MTD with the integration of Avalara with Accounting Seed.
- Learn how Co-operatives UK has become more efficient with their financial data by choosing Accounting Seed.

Co-operatives UK Supports Small Businesses with Accounting Seed

There is no doubt 2020 was particularly rough for small businesses. Despite this, Co-operatives UK remains successful and a vital resource for its co-operative members. Co-operatives UK is a 150-year old trade association dedicated to helping businesses owned and controlled by their members. These members might be customers, employees, residents, or suppliers who have a say in how the co-op is run.

Co-operatives UK represents thousands of co-operative businesses. From high street retailers to community owned pubs, fan owned football clubs to farmer controlled businesses, co-operatives are everywhere and together they are worth £38 billion to the UK economy. Co-operatives UK supports new and existing co-ops by providing professional advice in areas such as human resources, culture, governance, finance, marketing, membership strategy and co-operative development, as well as lobbying on behalf of the sector.

How does Co-operatives UK successfully represent such a diverse network of businesses? We chatted with Michael Shepherd, Head of Finance, to see how Accounting Seed is helping them reach their organisational goals.

From Sage Financials to Accounting Seed

Many businesses and organisations in the UK were stunned to find out that their accounting software would be turned off at the end of 2020. Co-operatives UK was one of them. "We had a contract with Sage Financials, and we found out at the end of April 2020, that they were going to turn off our accounting system by the end of the year. So, we went into a blind panic and said, 'What do we do!'" Shepherd stated.

Co-operatives UK found themselves in a predicament. They needed to find an accounting solution, fast. According to Shepherd, they had many options to consider. "Sage was really good. Our year end is in December. So, we knew that the year end wouldn't be done on Sage. So, in June, we looked at alternatives. We looked at QuickBooks, Xero, and we looked at Accounting Seed. We decided to go with Accounting Seed because it sits on the Salesforce platform."

Salesforce Connection Was a Top Priority

With over 800 members, Co-operatives UK is responsible for managing a significant amount of data. Shepherd said, "It (the accounting application) sits on top of our Salesforce platform which has 18,000 records. We have customer relationships with members and non-members to try and unite the co-op sector. Also, we produce an annual state of the nation report collating the financial contribution of co-ops to the economy. So, we have a vast amount of data in Salesforce, and Sage sat on top of it all."

They needed an accounting platform that would not only fill in for their previous accounting solution, but it had to seamlessly transfer all of their important data, as well. They needed an accounting application that would integrate with their Salesforce platform.



Accounting Seed Fills the Void and Delivers Results

Accounting Seed was the clear choice for Co-operatives UK for many reasons. The most important reason is our seamless integration with Salesforce. Co-operatives UK installed Accounting Seed at the end of June. By October, they successfully transferred all of their data and went live.

“Being in the UK, we chose Accounting Seed, because we didn’t have to do a lot of the learning again. We could have gone with Xero, but had concerns about the integration with Salesforce, our CRM system, which we needed it to do,” Shepherd said of their decision.

Co-operatives UK downloaded our platform and went live all within seven weeks. That’s pretty remarkable for such a busy organisation. “When we originally moved to Sage it took two and a half years. So, with Accounting Seed only taking seven weeks, it’s been really good,” Shepherd continued.

TRAINING WITH ACCOUNTING SEED

The training for Accounting Seed was as effortless as the transition to our platform. Out of the box, Accounting Seed comes with two licenses/seats to our interactive e-learning environment, Accounting Seed University.

The staff picked up right where they left off with Sage Financials and felt comfortable almost immediately with our accounting platform. In fact, some staff at Co-operatives UK didn’t even require training because Accounting Seed is so similar to what they were using beforehand. “About 15 of our staff never needed training on the platform, because they’re used to it. And it looks so much like what they’re used to working with. People who are on Salesforce and Sage, could be on your system within hours, which is brilliant,” Shepherd said.

Sage Financials vs Accounting Seed

It seems like the transition to Accounting Seed is already paying off for Co-operatives UK. They immediately appreciated the straightforward nature and seamless design of our platform. “There’s more structure there than Sage had in terms of finding reports that were already there. With Sage, you had to start from scratch to write all your own stuff. So, we’ve downloaded reports from Accounting Seed and done a month-end, and no one’s noticed that it took any longer/shorter than the previous one. And, we also have a portal from Salesforce that connects to Accounting Seed and produces invoices. No one’s missed any functionality (of Sage),” Shepherd said.

Co-operatives UK has been utilizing Accounting Seed for four months now. “We’ve been doing sales invoices, purchase orders, payment runs. There’s nothing we’ve not been able to do. I’ve been able to download reports from Sage and upload them into Accounting Seed and a lot of the staff hasn’t even noticed a difference,” Shepherd noted.

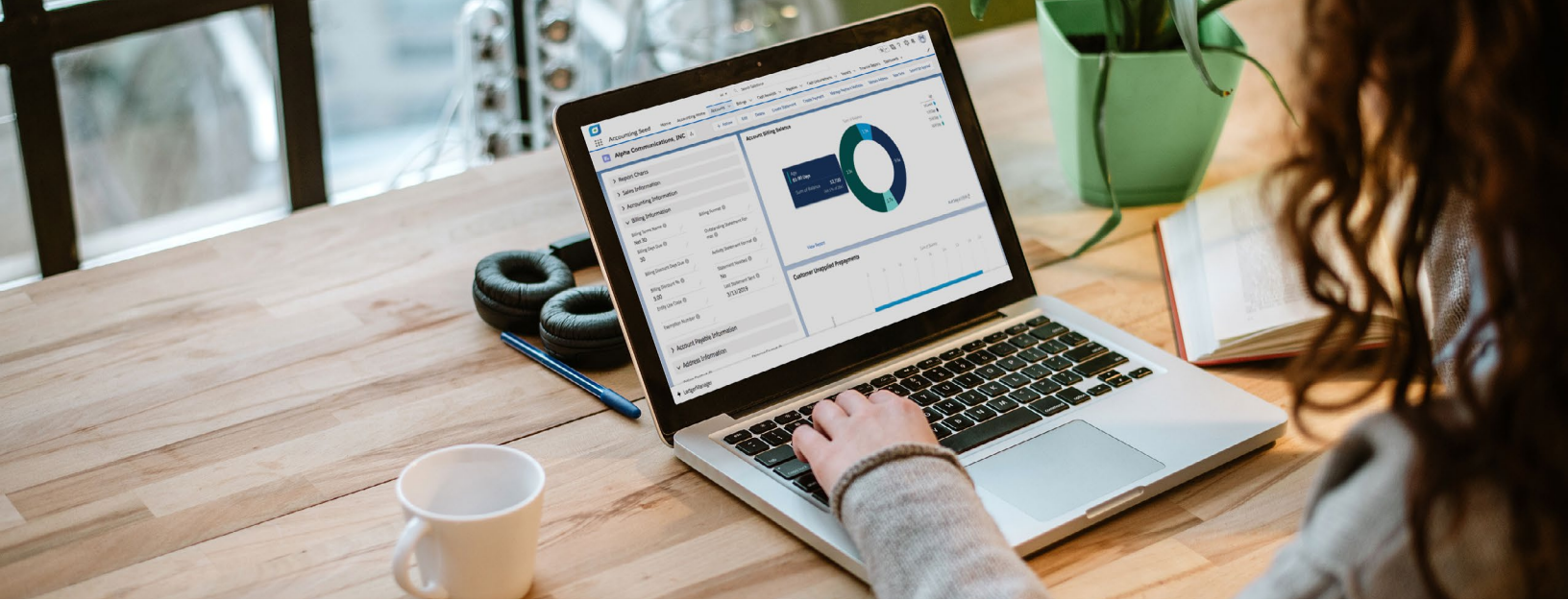
GL VARIABLES

It’s no secret that our users like the compatibility of Accounting Seed’s General Ledger. Shepherd, in particular, praises Accounting Seed’s GL variables, “One of the things Accounting Seed is better than Sage at, the GL variables one through four, they’re brilliant! Previously we were using dimensions that no one could get their head around. Those four things are available on every documentation, and we use them for projects and budget reporting, and it works brilliantly,” Shepherd added.



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- Michael Shepherd, Head of Finance



ACCOUNTING SEED INTEGRATES WITH PAYROLL

A lot of businesses were left scrambling when the country was shut down in March due to the pandemic. Co-operatives UK was no exception. They quickly realized they needed to adjust their in-office payroll system. Accounting Seed's connection to an organization's payroll system has proven to be a significant resource this year.

"Our year-end for payroll is March in the UK. So we had to put a new system in from April. And we've not been to the office since March 18, 2020 and almost no one has noticed any difference. I can do payroll now from my bedroom, I can sit here forever doing finance and accounts for Co-operatives UK without ever having to leave the room now. I don't need to go into the office," Shepherd said.

ACCOUNTING SEED ASSISTS WITH VAT RETURNS AND MTD

The MTD initiative has forced many UK businesses to take a look at their tax accounting processes. In fact, many businesses are looking for new accounting solutions for this very reason. Co-operatives UK was thrilled to learn that Accounting Seed, with the help of Avalara, are more than ready to assist with the UK's updated policies.

Shepherd expects a seamless tax filing and return this year with Accounting Seed. "The first VAT return we need to do is in January. And, I've heard from our people that all we need to do is download a plugin and it does it. And I have no reason to doubt that it won't do it! But, if it had gone through Sage, would it have ever turned up? I just don't know," he stated.

"We're even six months away from our year end and we know what our accounts will look like. We're ready for the annual report next year already. So all that's done within five to six weeks," he continued.

FASTER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT REPORTING

Another main difference between Sage Financials and Accounting Seed is the enhanced reporting features. Users love the ability to see real-time financial data instantly. "I think a lot of people will find the report writing is faster (with Accounting Seed) when you use one of the management reports as a ledger enquirer. There's no function like that on Sage. You have to sort of write your report. If you want to look at the electric, you just put the electric number in and it'll tell you. It'll be faster looking at the information when it's historical and the data is in there," Shepherd said of the improved reporting capabilities of his new accounting platform.

"It's funny, it's one of those things that with Accounting Seed, I feel more in control of what the data is. I don't put the data in, but the data is in there. But sometimes, in Sage, we wouldn't know if the data was right or wrong, and then we'd have to look to see if it was right," Shepherd continued.

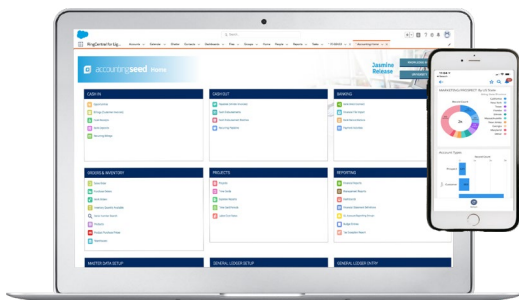
Accounting Seed Pays Off with Efficiency

Choosing Accounting Seed has really paid off for the team at Co-operatives UK. The initial scoping process was handled by our VP of EMEA Sales, Shane Deacon. "Shane Deacon has been brilliant. He's done above and beyond. And we don't see that everywhere," Shepherd said.

"Every interaction we've had with Accounting Seed has been brilliant. Everything we've done, we've done it slowly and it's worked. We were a lot more cautious than we needed to be because Accounting Seed has done a lot of the work," he continued.

The efficiency of Accounting Seed has also been a major benefit, "There's less options for people to put the wrong stuff in, so that's going to save me 10-15% of the time to look at everything. It gives us all the financial information we need and it's as detailed and/or as high-level as the audience needs," Shepherd relates.

Co-operatives UK is confident that their heightened efficiency with Accounting Seed will continue to help them support and empower members, and achieve goals. For us at Accounting Seed, this in itself is a major win.





0118.370.2366

accountingseed.com | appexchange.salesforce.com | emea@accountingseed.com