

Human Resource Executive®

UltiPro Pitches in to Help Chicago Cubs

As part of the Tribune Company, the Chicago Cubs previously used a large enterprise-resource-planning system to manage the baseball team's HR and payroll processes. After the club was acquired by Ricketts Acquisition, the Cubs needed to quickly move to an HCM solution that could address the team's range of compensation challenges.

The challenge was that the HR team only had 60 days to activate the new solution, roll out a new benefits package and complete the company's first open enrollment.

Its solution? UltiPro, which helped the organization get up and running fast, process an error-free payroll on Jan. 1, 2010, and quickly enroll eligible staff in the company's new benefits program.

"We had no errors in our first live payroll with UltiPro," says Jenny Surma, senior director of human resources for the Chicago Cubs. "The only change for employees was simply visiting a different website to view personal HR and payroll information."

This achievement is all the more impressive when you consider the team's complex payroll. Today, many states and cities present complicated tax regulations that require professional athletes to pay taxes in each location where they play, even if they're only on the field for a few hours. It was clear to the selection team that UltiPro was the best solution to address these complexities.

"As a professional sports organization, we have intricate compensation issues involving unique contracts for different players and very complex taxation," says Jamie Norton, a finance manager with the team. "Previously, we had to manipulate data to get the proper pay calculations, often creating a mismatch in compensation information because some data had been overwritten to ensure players were paid correctly. UltiPro is flexible and powerful enough to automate these processes for us, so our data is accurate and manual reconciliation is minimized for a correct payroll."

With a 182-day season, the Cubs' payroll roster can scale from 200 employees in January to more than 1,200 by baseball season. Although some employees are high-profile stars, many work in Wrigley Field (such as groundskeepers or vendors) or support the team in minor-league cities. These individuals can be paid on an hourly, salaried or contractual basis. For the Cubs, UltiPro has delivered scalable functionality with an investment advantage for the best business value.

"We needed large-enterprise functionality that would also make sense for an organization that is sometimes contracted to just 200 active employees," says Surma. "UltiPro provides us with comprehensive HR features that adapt to whatever size we are at any time, and the solution doesn't require the costly hardware or maintenance of an ERP system. UltiPro is definitely an excellent fit for us."

The Cubs have an additional unique aspect: The organization handles major and minor league teams—which are each compensated differently. Several hundred minor leaguers join the team each year, and many employees require payroll changes during the season, such as in September when the Cubs' roster expands from 25 players to 40 players, or when players are sent down to the minor leagues. With UltiPro, the Cubs can make simultaneous pay changes for specific groups of employees in compliance with union contracts. Previously, Surma's team had to manually enter these updates for each employee.

"We used to make salary changes by hand for hundreds of stadium-operations personnel and minor-league players," says Surma.



hundreds of stadium-operations personnel and minor-league players," says Surma. "UltiPro has eliminated days of data entry for us by handling wage changes for groups at one time."

Today, Cubs employees are settling into a great family ownership and enjoying enhanced HCM benefits. The finance and HR teams are happy with the choice of UltiPro—which has made them the all-stars of the front office.

HIGHLIGHTS

Organization: Chicago Cubs

Headquarters: Chicago

Primary Business: Professional sports team

Talent-Management Challenge: Managing technology changes swiftly after acquisition.