

# Managing Risks, Add Transparency and Visibility, While Keeping Auditors Happy



“We had a great year-end in March and the auditors were very happy... It’s been a very successful project and shows that even mid-sized organizations can benefit from the automation that BlackLine brings to the monthly close process.”

—Ian Trisk-Grove, Chief Accountant at Camelot Group UK

Camelot has run the UK National Lottery successfully for over 19 years. In the last financial year, it achieved annual National Lottery sales of over £6.7 billion, of which over £1.7 billion was returned to National Lottery Good Causes – transforming the lives of people and communities across the UK.

Camelot also provides consultancy and management services to lotteries worldwide – including the Irish National Lottery, the New York State Lottery, the Texas State Lottery, the Kentucky State Lottery, the Massachusetts State Lottery and the Interprovincial Lottery Corporation of Canada. Camelot is a business that has grown in complexity and global reach.

There are four principle-trading entities in the group, covering the UK National Lottery, Global Services, Business Solutions (which is responsible for running head office services on behalf of the other entities – for example human resources, accounting and legal services) and Strategic Solutions, which is dedicated to project delivery. However, despite the billions of funds that flow through the organization annually, it maintains a relatively modest general ledger accounting function of just 10 people.

## INDUSTRY

Gaming/Entertainment

## REGION

United Kingdom & Ireland

## ADOPTION DATE

2013

## ERP

SAP

## NUMBER OF USERS

15

## PRODUCTS

Account Reconciliations, Task Management

## BUSINESS IMPACT

Maximized productivity for financial accounting and control departments; managed risks by adding unprecedented transparency and visibility to the financial close process; replaced the month-end close checklist with something more comprehensible and shareable; improved the financial close process significantly and kept auditors very happy.

For Ian Trisk-Grove, Chief Accountant and head of the Group Financial Accounting & Control team, it was the constant search for efficiency that drove the decision to embark on an initial project to deploy BlackLine's cloud-based Finance Control and Automation platform for Account Reconciliation and Task Management.

## Why BlackLine

Work to implement the Account Reconciliation product began in September 2013 with the idea of bringing increased standardization, productivity and control to the reconciliation process. In common with many organizations, the monthly reconciliation process was previously paper bound and reliant on a number of manually updated spreadsheets.

---

“There were countless lever arch files full of paper and, with the increasing complexity and expansion of the business, I felt we could do more to improve efficiency.”

—Ian Trisk-Grove, Chief Accountant at Camelot Group UK

---

Camelot UK Lotteries is regulated by the Gambling Commission and Ian considered that the BlackLine applications would also provide a more robust platform for demonstrating adherence to best practice processes to the regulator, management and external auditors. Camelot's transaction accounting is performed in SAP ledgers and it is the trial balance from these that is imported into the BlackLine reconciliation system at the start of the monthly close process. The chart of accounts runs to around 400 accounts, but within that range there are more than 50 accounts that warrant close attention every period.

## The Results

Maximized productivity for financial accounting and control departments by auto-certifying accounts. With BlackLine's Reconciliation, Camelot UK was able to support a more standardized approach to reconciliations, which was difficult to achieve in a paper-based system. Many of the manual activities in the reconciliation process are automated by BlackLine; significantly reducing the time and effort spent on reconciliations in Camelot's financial close process.

By separating the 'wheat from the chaff' according to risk, Ian's financial accounting and control department can maximize productivity. For example, lower risk accounts can be auto-certified according to defined business rules. “It also means that we can start the reconciliation process earlier than would otherwise have been the case. We know that anything that had been auto-certified early on and is subsequently adjusted will be highlighted by the system,” comments Ian.

Managed risk by adding unprecedented transparency and visibility to the financial close process. “One of the benefits of BlackLine is that it has given us the ability to assign risk profiles to balance sheet accounts. We are dealing with large sums of money and also have a continuing obligation to ensure that we have complete control over our substantial liabilities such as unclaimed prizes. We have a duty to protect players’ funds. Therefore, some accounts are deemed relatively high risk,” adds Ian.

Ian is especially appreciative of the comprehensive dashboards and reporting which give him real-time visibility into status, exceptions, potential impact, and points of risk. “It means that throughout the process I have a true appreciation of the un-reconciled risk – something that was not readily achievable before BlackLine,” he adds.

Replaced the month-end close checklist with something more comprehensible and shareable. With BlackLine Task management, a web-based platform for managing accounting and finance tasks and processes, Ian is able to replace the month- end close checklist (maintained in a spreadsheet) with something more comprehensive and shareable. And although it is less crucial in a relatively small accounting function sharing the same office space, Ian sees it as an important stepping-stone to introducing further improvements in the future.

“I think there is a lot more we can do with BlackLine, for example in the area of staff mobility. People generally work in silos in their roles month-in and month-out. If we can increase standardization and have everything properly documented then we can move people around. We can expose them to different parts of the business and give them a better understanding of how we operate, making them more effective as business partners to the organization. This will become more crucial as the organization grows internationally,” says Ian.

Improved the financial close process significantly and kept auditors very happy. With the success of the first two BlackLine products under his belt, Ian is keen to build on what has been achieved so far. The next step is the implementation of the Journal Entry product which will allow Camelot to create, review, and approve journals, then electronically certify and store them with all supporting documentation ready for posting into SAP. “We had a great year-end in March and the auditors were very happy with the improvements we have made to the close process,” says Ian. “It’s been a very successful project and shows that even mid-sized organizations can benefit from the automation that BlackLine brings to the monthly close process,” he concludes.