

Increasing Visibility Across 200+ Hotels —and Making Audits a “Non-Event”



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—Jeannette Nimmo, GL Global Process Owner, Hyatt

Hyatt Hotels Corporation, headquartered in Chicago, is a leading global hospitality company with a proud heritage of making guests feel more than welcome. The company’s worldwide portfolio includes 618 properties in 51 countries.

The Challenge

While Hyatt’s corporate office had already eliminated spreadsheets from their monthly reconciliation process, the accounting consolidation department still had to outsource much of their month-end reconciliations to a service provider in India. “We were monitoring 200-plus hotels but using this web-based tool that was really limited and very slow,” said Jeanette Nimmo, GL global process owner at Hyatt. “We were always waiting on a report that would tell us where the hotels were in the close process. Nothing was in real time, and our visibility across the process—and across the company—was incredibly limited.”

The existing system also made audits laborious. The team had to manually download statements and sort through backups to collect data for auditors.

INDUSTRY

Hospitality

REGION

Global

ADOPTION DATE

2009

ERP

Oracle

NUMBER OF USERS

418

PRODUCTS

Account Reconciliations, Task Management

BUSINESS IMPACT

Increased visibility and saved time, eliminated the need to pull data for auditors, ensured segregation of duties, enabled hotels to focus on customers instead of accounting.

Complicating matters, the department’s task management tool wasn’t integrated with their reconciliation data, which meant the team never had full visibility into dependencies. As result, keeping employees on task was a highly manual process. “We had a separate tool for task monitoring,” said Nimmo. “It really slowed us down.”

Why BlackLine

In the search for a more automated reconciliation solution. Hyatt reviewed multiple providers. “We looked at several other tools. BlackLine was the best fit,” said Nimmo. “It was entirely in the cloud, which allowed us complete visibility. It was also the best option cost-wise, and we knew we could grow with it.”

The ability to implement BlackLine in stages—yet still have full functionality of individual processes—was also a deciding factor. “We knew with BlackLine, we wouldn’t have to do everything at once. We could activate different modules as we needed them,” said Nimmo. “Plus, it’s so user friendly and easy to follow. It’s really self-explanatory.”

The team implemented two BlackLine modules, Account Reconciliations and Task Management, in a mere three weeks. “We were updating Oracle at the same time and had a whole new chart of accounts, but it was easy to get everything into BlackLine,” said Travis Curl, general ledger analyst at Hyatt. “Everything was just an import. It was an easy transition, and there were no difficult issues with BlackLine. Any time I had questions, BlackLine got back to me that same day. That’s been very helpful, knowing they’re always available.”

The Results

Eliminated the need to pull data for auditors. As auditors can be given direct access to BlackLine, the team no longer has to spend time searching for and aggregating data. “Audits are a non-event for us now. Auditors can pull the information they need directly out of BlackLine. It’s a huge time savings for us, and they really appreciate not waiting on us,” said Nimmo. “Internal auditors have access any time they want. External auditors are given access for a limited period. And the hotels appreciate that BlackLine won’t let them look at reconciliations that aren’t through the system yet.”

Increased visibility and saved time monitoring the month-end closes of 200+ hotels. With BlackLine, the team knows exactly where each hotel is in the close process, in real time. “I can see where everybody is at any point, and we can hand tasks back and forth without using email, which is a huge time savings for us,” said Nimmo. “We don’t have to key in information that’s already there, and we’re making sure people are spending time on issues, not mundane things like putting information together. With BlackLine, we’re probably saving a whole person at the beginning of the year in a three-month time frame.”

Added Curl, “The ability to have a lot of different functions at your fingertips, all kinds of reports we can run at any time, saves us so much time. I haven’t worked with a tool better than BlackLine.”

Ensured segregation of duties. Segregation of duties is crucial to compliance, yet Hyatt's previous system made it difficult to track and manage dependencies. "BlackLine helps ensure that we're following segregation of duty guidelines. It won't let one person prepare and review," said Nimmo.

Enabled hotels to focus on customers, not accounting. With BlackLine, the team has freed each hotel to focus on people and customer service—Hyatt's number one priority—instead of their books. "We're constantly looking at ways to take the work out of the hotel and bring it here so our hotels can focus on the customers," said Nimmo. "BlackLine has helped us achieve that."