

CASE STUDY

SEEK: Outpacing Change and Driving Finance Excellence with Process Automation



ABOUT SEEK AND FINANCE EXCELLENCE (FINEX)

SEEK (ASX: SEK) is a diverse group of employment and education companies and is a leader in online employment marketplaces. Operating on a truly global scale, the company employs 1,000 people in Australia and over 10,000 people around the world, servicing Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, South-East Asia, Brazil and Mexico.

With a culture of innovation and a focus on world-class technology, the company strives to maximise value for its customers and employees. A key way this value is delivered is through the **Finance Excellence, or “FinEx”, team**. The FinEx team ensures that SEEK’s 200 APAC Finance staff have access to timely, trusted and reliable data so they can provide actionable insights to help drive the business forward.

The FinEx team at SEEK identified SolveXia as the ideal tool to provide self-service process automation capabilities for the Finance department. By introducing SolveXia as a low-code, decentralised way to automate data manipulation across Finance, SEEK has been able to streamline and consolidate processes, freeing up time for staff and raising the quality and assurance of the organisation’s data.



OPPORTUNITY: HELPING FINANCE SCALE AND ADAPT TO CHANGE

The FinEx team at SEEK helps drive innovation across Finance through a combination of transformation projects, iterative enhancements to core technologies (like budgeting and planning systems) and ongoing technology support for BAU (Business as Usual) staff. Instead of the traditional approach of imposing new technologies on Finance staff, the team prefers a “pull” rather than “push” approach:

“Major (transformation) programs are often forced on people, whether they are ready or not. The difference with FinEx is that we adapt to the people who want to change when they are ready to change. This is a much more effective way to innovate, rather than just throwing technology at people” says Peter Lim, Head of Finance Excellence at SEEK.

This approach of engaging with the business revealed an opportunity to help the Finance department. With SEEK experiencing rapid growth, Finance processes were changing and becoming more sophisticated and complex. With IT resources being finite (as is often the case in any company), the business was increasingly turning to manual, spreadsheet-driven, workarounds for repetitive data manipulation and reporting:

“Over time, people stop engaging with IT, and they start to build quick manual workarounds. You end up with a duplication of processes and inconsistencies across teams. You also have little visibility over these processes which makes it very difficult for a new person to step into a role” - Charlie Nooney, Reporting Architect and ANZ Engagement Lead at SEEK.

In addition to the risk of having mission-critical work taking place manually in Excel, with limited visibility, SEEK also has the challenge of supporting a rapidly growing and evolving multinational business. With the speed of delivery and agility a key concern for the business, the FinEx team required a solution that could be used to automate and improve the quality of Finance processes, while also reducing the reliance and burden on IT and other centralised resources.

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SEEK**

SOLVEXIA: THE FINANCE-FRIENDLY SOLUTION FOR AUTOMATION

The key objective for SEEK was to find a solution that could automate data manipulation across Finance. With most of these processes being performed using spreadsheets, this meant leveraging the existing knowledge and skills of staff, particularly in relation to Excel. According to Charlie, SEEK “wanted a way to improve standardisation, consistency, integrity and process visibility, while accelerating direct benefits to our teams. This was possible by still allowing them to use Excel, which greatly helped adoption as the technology is familiar”.

The team identified SolveXia as an ideal solution. In particular, SEEK felt that the software had a strong capability for automating the type of data manipulation that is prevalent across the Finance team. This includes calculating, grouping, categorising, aggregating and reconciling data each day, week or month. A standout feature of SolveXia was how well it integrated with staff’s existing spreadsheets, enabling easier and faster adoption of the automation. The software could also be put in the hands of Finance staff with minimal training and required no developer or IT knowledge, allowing the teams to rapidly automate their processes.

SEEK also determined that SolveXia would fit nicely into their existing technology stack, acting as a business-friendly solution to fill gaps that were not being met by more IT-focused and owned tools like Extract-Transform-Load (ETL) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA), which the company also uses.

Also, by automating and documenting Finance processes across short and fast sprints, SolveXia provides visibility over what would otherwise be siloed processes. According to Peter, “In order for us to go to IT for a strategically aligned project, we need to have an end-to-end understanding of the process”. SolveXia’s ability to automatically document processes is critical, “being able to provide good documentation for processes, so that IT can demystify what is going on in Excel, improves their ability to deliver fit for purpose solutions” says Peter.

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GETTING QUICK WINS AND SCALING AUTOMATION

As part of the rollout for SolveXia, SEEK engaged its teams to run a two-day hackathon for automation. “We wanted to understand the product and working style of the SolveXia team, while also creating some excitement and prompt further ideas for automation” says Charlie. Run across APAC, 10 staff automated six processes. Examples of the processes automated during the hackathon include transforming and mapping trial balance data, producing an expense analysis, consolidating tax information and preparing multi-region revenue reporting.

The hackathon proved to be highly effective in demonstrating the benefits and value of automation for staff and the executive team. “We could see the benefits of automation with relatable SEEK examples, such as time savings, while also seeing that the tool was fast to learn”, says Charlie. The other key outcome for SEEK was that SolveXia helped promote a culture of governance and change management around the processes that staff wanted to automate. “Rather than a lift and shift of manual processes to a tool, you try to understand what people are actually trying to do with their process and why”, says Charlie.



Using the momentum from the early success, SEEK has rapidly deployed SolveXia to automate processes across its APAC region. The software is now actively being used across Finance and FP&A teams, having automated an additional 10 processes in less than 6 months. This includes producing billing and revenue reports, running a sensitivity analysis, reconciliations, data validations and other processes. While much of the focus has been on automating Excel-heavy data manipulation and reporting, the FinEx team has also been using SolveXia to integrate and validate data between systems such as their budgeting and planning and ERP.

With awareness of SolveXia quickly expanding across the Finance team, SEEK plans to accelerate its automation journey. The company plans to automate additional, Excel-focused, data manipulation processes across APAC. There is also an emphasis on leveraging SolveXia to assist with the integration of data between systems as well as using the tool to streamline data collection from external sources, such as SEEK’s investee businesses.

OUTCOMES FROM USING SOLVEXIA

Naturally, time savings are an important factor for driving automation and SEEK estimates that ~20 days is saved per annum for every use case that will be onboarded to the SolveXia platform. The company believes that a payback period, based on time savings alone, will be achieved within 12 months.

That said, SEEK are looking far beyond time savings when it comes to automation and their use of SolveXia. “We see SolveXia as a productivity tool, like Microsoft Office, allowing people to do their job better”, says Peter. SolveXia is providing the ability to scale and remain agile, ensuring that the business can cope with rapid growth. The software also provides a holistic view of Finance processes across the company, increasing visibility and helping to eliminate bottlenecks, inconsistencies and lay the groundwork for large-scale IT transformations in the future.

Processes are being run more frequently, helping deliver more timely insights to stakeholders such as management and sales teams. There is greater assurance in the integrity of the data being used for decision making, having reduced or eliminated manual data manipulation. The team has also been able to consolidate duplicate processes that were being repeated across geographic locations, creating even greater efficiency.

SolveXia is also helping to show staff that there is a better, and smarter, way to work. The impact of the software is, according to Charlie, “less about cost savings, more about empowerment and enablement”. The ease-of-adoption for business users has been critical and profound, with Finance BAU staff able to learn the software in hours (not days), and start automating with support and guidance from the FinEx team.

A key factor in this amazing success has been the relationship between the SolveXia and SEEK teams. “Working with the team at SolveXia has been great”, says Charlie, “we see this as a partnership, and the advice and expertise (from SolveXia) has challenged us in the right way to achieve the best results”.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



**10 PROCESSES
AUTOMATED IN LESS
THAN 6 MONTHS.**



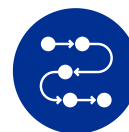
**AUTOMATION
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**ROI EXPECTED IN
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