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## Plastica Pools enjoys the warm safe waters of ADP SPA

A swimming pool at home is no longer the preserve of the super rich. Owning a pool of your own is now as affordable as a good home movie entertainment system, and can be less expensive than a new kitchen. Plastica Pools, the UK's leading swimming pool manufacturer and distributor, has been growing steadily since 1972. Household spend on leisure activities and sports equipment, according to Datamonitor, is still set to rise well into the future. "Recently, we've also benefited from higher house prices. More people are deciding to stay where they are and improve their own homes rather than constantly moving on," commented Plastica Pools' Finance Director, Ian Warne.

Long term steady growth in sales has also meant long term steady growth in the numbers of Plastica Pools' employees. Ian Warne had been very pleased with ADP's services at his previous organisation and convinced Plastica Pools' management that outsourcing the payroll management process to ADP's bureau service was more cost effective. "At that time we had about 80 staff, and we were very happy with the service we bought from ADP. But then we were approached by another bureau service provider and they offered the same service, but much cheaper. We made a commercial decision to move our payroll to them, but from day one it did not do what they said it would. We didn't get updates and the service was very poor."

By 2005, the company had grown to over 100 people. Talking about payroll expertise, Ian says; "I know something, my assistants know something, but none of us are specialists. Once we were employing about 110 people, I put in place an HR person and wanted her to have the tools to do the job properly. This was a good opportunity to come back to ADP." The second time around, Plastica Pools selected ADP's popular SurePay Advantage, (SPA) and complemented it with HRA, an integrated HR management tool designed to work in combination with SPA.

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Plastica Pools did not have any sort of HR software before HRA. Time sheets, for example, were paper based and then written into spreadsheets. “It’s nice to have everything working seamlessly and in one place. All we have to do now is put any staff changes into HRA, and it drops straight into SPA,” says Ian.

The company has a straightforward payroll, mostly monthly paid, and all are offered a stakeholder pension scheme on a salary sacrifice basis; “that way more money ends up in our employee’s pension funds and it’s more tax efficient for everyone.” With pension scheme provision always in the news, and legislation constantly being reviewed and changed, ADP’s experts are always on hand to help Ian make any changes to the system that he needs.

Plastica Pools is one of the few companies that own the entire swimming pool process from design and manufacture to distribution, and its employees reflect that mix. “Where other companies are just box shifters, 50% of our staff are in manufacturing and distribution. We employ everyone from people in the factory to lorry drivers.” Trading from over 100,000 square foot of space in Hastings, Sussex, Plastica Pools accommodates a lot of skilled people, from the engineering shop where ladders and covers are made up, to the plastic moulding shop where new designs are built to customers specifications. From sunken pools to above ground pools, Plastica Pools caters for all needs and tastes; “We even make the pools for Channel Four’s Big Brother,” says Ian.

Overtime tends to only happen during peak seasons and Ian is always thinking about smarter ways to run the company’s finances. “Although payroll doesn’t add value to the business, it is a tool that we can use to save us time so that we can get on with managing the business. Even though it appears to be a minor task, it has to be right. Getting paid is the reason that people come to work, but we don’t want to be occupied with the process all of the time, which is why ADP is so important to us”.

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When the company used to run its payroll in-house, a number of systems failures brought home the importance of having a contingency plan for payroll. Ian remembers; “Our printer failed, and we couldn’t print payslips. On another occasion the PC fell over and died and we had to reload the software onto another machine and re-enter all the pay data. That gets you thinking about how we do things. We’re not IT specialists; we manufacture and distribute swimming pools.” With ADP, if Plastica Pools’ modem should ever fail they can put the data on a disk and bike it to ADP and the payroll will all get done. If Plastica Pools’ dedicated PC falls over, ADP has a back-up of all the information and can guarantee getting everyone paid. “That is a huge safety net for us, and when you work out the cost of outsourcing that sort of expertise, it is cheaper than employing people in-house.”

The SPA and HRA service went live in June 2005 and Ian and his team of seven are very happy with it. “Under no circumstances are we moving again.”

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