



# SOUTHERN STAR TRANSFORMS ERP PLATFORM TO MANAGE GROWTH



## Oracle Cloud provides the foundation for a new infrastructure

Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline is dedicated to delivering innovative energy solutions through talent, technology, and collaboration. The company, a leading transporter of natural gas to America's heartland, undertook its biggest technology project to date: implementing an ERP platform across its organization.

"We are very innovative and forward-thinking," says Tami Wilson, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Growth Officer, Southern Star. "Sometimes regulated businesses seem to be a little slower to move, but we are anything but."

Southern Star operates approximately 5,800 miles of natural-gas pipeline in the Midwest and Mid-Continent regions of the United States. The company's pipeline system, facilities, and employees are located in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Texas, with headquarters in Owensboro, Kentucky.

### Building a platform for growth

"We are all very interested in growing Southern Star," Wilson says. "We can either grow it organically or through acquisition but it means an increase in terms of transactions or number of customers. We needed to be prepared for growth, including having the right technology in place so we can be successful."

The company needed to address its disparate systems and create an integrated platform across the organization. For example, timekeeping was a different program than payroll. It also needed to modernize its infrastructure with a move to the cloud. Manual processes and Excel spreadsheets were not efficient, and the existing system would not support growth plans. The decision was made to introduce a new ERP platform.

Southern Star first developed a strong understanding of its existing processes as well as learning about potential shortfalls. The next steps were a review of software demos and assessment of potential transformation partners. After formally reviewing multiple vendors, Southern Star chose Oracle Cloud with Capgemini as its transformation partner.

"Oracle was the right fit for us," explains Suzanne Gonzalez, Manager of Financial Planning & Analysis and former ERP Project Leader for Southern Star. "It was not too big or overly complicated, and it was robust enough to allow for growth. We also wanted some standardization and best practices, and we felt like Oracle brought that to the table. And with the cloud, it was also bringing the newest technology."



## Meaningful change management

"We have a wonderful organization with very low turnover," Wilson says. "People get comfortable with how they do their jobs so, when making a change this big and intensive, you need a good change-management plan. And some people were worried, but now we are seeing efficiencies and improvements."

"We didn't make any snap decisions, and we were very thorough in preparing for the project," Wilson explains. "We made sure we had all the stakeholders involved, filled key project roles with strong people, and determined how we were going to move forward."

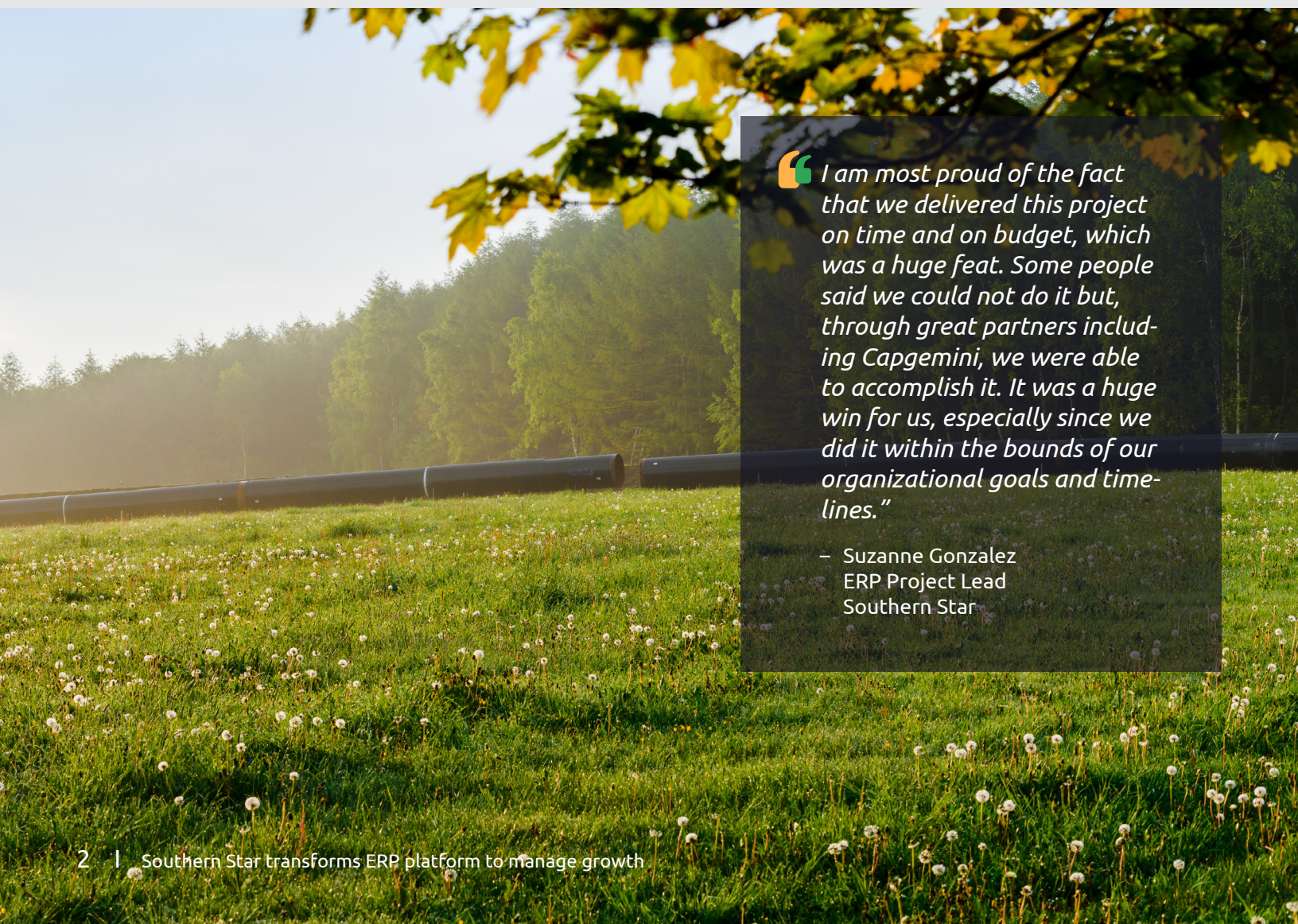
Change management was an important part of the project from the beginning, with an approach focused on both teams and people. A group of change ambassadors from different parts of the company was established and focused solely on how people were being affected by the project.

"The people side of the project was just as important or even more important than evaluating the changes to

all of our systems," says Patti Jenkins, Organizational Development Senior Specialist, Southern Star. "Our primary focus and how we really kept ourselves accountable throughout the process was to look at change through a funnel. Are we making sure people know the vision and the end product? Are we collaborating? Are we working together on this change and presenting it? Are we going at the right pace? The change ambassador team really helped us keep connected to our people."

Weekly meetings with Southern Star's subject matter experts and Capgemini presented the opportunity to talk about the changes that were coming and how they should be communicated to the teams. With HR processes such as paychecks, timecards, and absence reporting all impacted by the project, every employee at Southern Star felt some change.

"Some parts of our company have entirely new processes for how they do their jobs," says Jenkins. "Some of our teams have a whole new job now. Ultimately, everyone at Southern Star was impacted by this – but for the better."



*"I am most proud of the fact that we delivered this project on time and on budget, which was a huge feat. Some people said we could not do it but, through great partners including Capgemini, we were able to accomplish it. It was a huge win for us, especially since we did it within the bounds of our organizational goals and timelines."*

– Suzanne Gonzalez  
ERP Project Lead  
Southern Star



## Managing the project

“Capgemini’s CloudNow methodology really helped us keep a pulse on how the project was going,” explains Gonzalez. “The daily cadence with the team helped us identify risk and followed through to resolution more quickly than a traditional waterfall project. It also allowed our users to be in the system right away. It meant that within a couple of weeks of starting development, we had users actually demoing and testing in the system.”

The move from an on-premises world to a cloud environment has been an adjustment. Southern Star’s old system was highly customized because changes could just be requested from the IT Department. Now, requests need to be logged and enhancements are limited since one of the goals of the project was to reduce the amount of customization. It means the system can easily be upgraded every quarter to keep it up-to-date.

Southern Star has also automated some of its testing with Capgemini, a function not implemented in its previous on-premises system. The cloud architecture supports automated testing and ensures quarterly updates happen smoothly.

While the pandemic made some parts of the process more challenging, it also helped the project team focus. The internal group spent more hours on the project instead of commuting, saving travel time and costs.

“Once we understood we would be doing this remotely, we worked through the difficulties and set the expectations that we would be doing the project from

testing to training remotely,” says Gonzalez. “It was not always optimal, but the team delivered and learned very quickly how to collaborate through video and phone calls, as well as email.”


“Being the Organizational Change Management (OCM) leader, I was worried about how we were going to collaborate, build the systems, and learn new processes,” says Jenkins. “But everyone was resilient and rose to the challenge. In fact, some people said the pandemic gave them time to be at home and focus without some of the usual office distractions. We just continued to move forward.”

## Transforming the employee experience

Human resources has seen the most change in the company. Having the Human Capital Management (HCM) modules under the same umbrella as finance and supply chain has been an adjustment but there is more connection across the company. Now, benefits, time-keeping, payroll, and online learning are all part of the new HCM, and employees are seeing the benefits.

The feedback from the self-serve and mobile options has been very positive. Before the ERP project, employees had to call HR and fax documents to change an address or report a life event or other personal information changes. Now employees can just go into the system at any time and update information.

Southern Star has more than 400 employees in the field and they now enter and submit timecards or prepare expense reports via the mobile app for manager

A photograph of three people in a modern office setting. A man in a dark blue shirt is on the left, gesturing with his hand while speaking. A woman in a white sweater is in the center, smiling and looking at him. Another woman in a blue denim shirt is on the right, looking towards the man. They are sitting on colorful armchairs (blue, orange, green) around a white table with a laptop and coffee cups.

“My experience with Capgemini was amazing. They were always here to help us. We had struggles and we had roadblocks, but we worked around them as a team and figured it out. It’s been a good experience.”

– Patti Jenkins  
Organizational Development  
Senior Specialist  
Southern Star

approval. And managers approve reports, timecards, and expense reports on the app as well.

"It really makes a big difference for us across the board," explains Gonzalez. "For example, employees can now capture photos of receipts and submit expenses via the app. Once they are submitted, their manager can approve them in the app as well. It just streamlines the whole process."

"We have received positive feedback from our new hires that the system is really easy to use," she says. "Our team members are adjusting to change so it was positive to hear people who had no experience with our old system had positive feedback."

Users are also able to make approvals via email. This is a simple addition but it is a significant time saver for employees since it impacts all HR areas such as promotions, time sheets, and absence requests, as well as supply-chain requisitions, invoices, and journal entries in finance.

The move to Oracle Cloud also allows Southern Star to leverage other tools. For example, it has implemented a barcoding system that integrates well with Oracle, and the HCM module now has a benefits aggregator.

## Ready for growth

"Do not underestimate the time needed from the organization to deliver the project while keeping up with the day-to-day," says Gonzalez. "And don't underestimate the impact the change will have on everyone in the organization. Make sure you seek the team's feedback and be flexible enough to adapt to it. A critical part of our process was listening and changing course when needed during the project."

Capgemini's CloudNow methodology also supports retrospectives. Southern Star did three-week sprints and used the reviews to develop action plans. It helped identify areas where people were struggling with time commitments, so resources could be adjusted or added as needed.

"We are looking forward to the efficiencies of the integrated system," Wilson says. "Manual processes are being replaced, and there will be less transactional work. This means people can spend more time analyzing information and using data analytics from the system in ways that are going to help us move forward as an organization."

## About Capgemini

Capgemini is a global leader in partnering with companies to transform and manage their business by harnessing the power of technology. The Group is guided everyday by its purpose of unleashing human energy through technology for an inclusive and sustainable future. It is a responsible and diverse organization of 290,000 team members in nearly 50 countries. With its strong 50 year heritage and deep industry expertise, Capgemini is trusted by its clients to address the entire breadth of their business needs, from strategy and design to operations, fuelled by the fast evolving and innovative world of cloud, data, AI, connectivity, software, digital engineering and platforms. The Group reported in 2020 global revenues of \$19.3 billion

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*Note: current conversion is €1 to \$1.20 (2/17/21)*

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