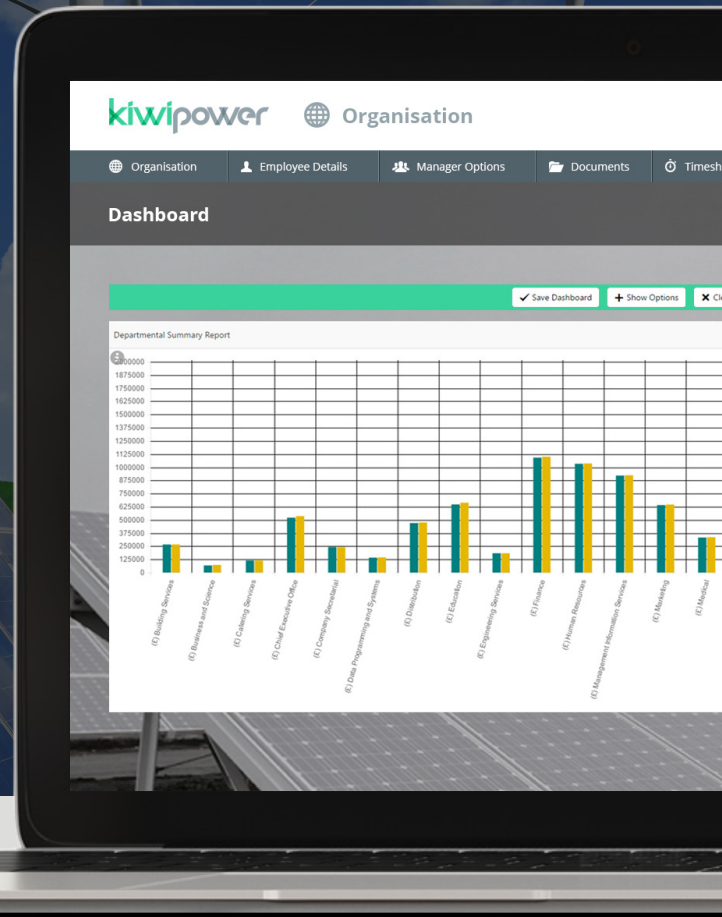


Customer success story

“ I knew Ciphr was the best HR software we could buy for our budget. A lot of products in the same price range don't offer the same configurability that Ciphr does – it's fantastic how much we can configure the system to match our processes. ”

kiwipower



About Kiwi Power

Kiwi Power is a global company whose distributed energy platform simply and reliably unlocks flexibility from distributed energy resources (DERs) to maximise their value. It works with partners in more than 10 countries to optimise and monetise over 1GW of DERs.

- 🕒 Founded in London in 2009
- 👥 HR team of two supports around 75 employees and contractors worldwide
- 📅 Ciph customer since November 2019
- 🗓️ Interviewed May 2020

Customer success story

Kiwi Power

‘Our processes were email and form-driven, and we had no insight into HR metrics’

Despite being a technology-led, forward-thinking company, Kiwi Power had a history of tangled HR processes, involving everything from paper forms to PDFs, emails and Excel spreadsheets, explains Leanne Walsham, head of talent and business services. “When I joined in 2016, there were a lot of processes – like annual leave – that were still done on paper. We tried to get rid of paper and move to email and PDF forms, but it was difficult to get employees and line leaders to change their old habits.”

This mix of processes and data-storage locations meant Walsham and office manager and HR Administrator Emily Stewart were spending a disproportionate amount of their time chasing or checking HR paperwork and administration. “We also had absolutely no insight into talent management and HR processes, and no reporting,” adds Walsham. “The only reporting we had ever produced was for due diligence processes in the last few years, and when the company was hiring a new CEO. However, this required me to produce a lot of information manually – which was really time-consuming and labourious. We simply didn’t have any leading indicators or key performance indications (KPIs) coming out of the HR function at all, because we didn’t have line leaders who understood the value of people data, the need for one source of truth and a good tool.”

‘We’re a tech company; we need to practice what we preach’

Although any HR system selection project takes a reasonable amount of time, Kiwi Power’s journey to implementing specialist HR software was longer than most organisation’s: Walsham began her search for a provider in 2017, but it wasn’t until late 2019 – with the backing of a new CEO – that she was able to secure buy-in and budget.

“When our new CEO joined in September 2019, I took the opportunity to demonstrate how a lack of an HR system was holding us back – by giving him lots of paper forms to sign during his onboarding process. When I was sitting at my desk, going through the forms with him, I spoke with him about our processes and how I wanted to improve them and said: ‘I’d love to pitch to you why we need to have an HRIS.’ And he said: ‘no need, you just did. Which one do you want?’

“We’d met with Ciphre back in 2017 during our initial search, and I remained convinced it was the right system for our company, at the right price. So I picked up the People Management magazine on my desk, pointed at the Ciphre advert on the back cover and said: ‘this is the one I want’. I didn’t even go back to market because I knew the budget wouldn’t change, and I knew Ciphre was the best system we could buy for our budget.”

Features that made Ciphre stand out from other HR systems on the market included how configurable the system is for HR users, how the implementation is carried out by the product owner (Ciphre), and features such as onboarding and flexible user roles.

“I can configure tab names, and which users have read or write access to specific pages. That really appealed to me; a lot of other products in the same price range didn’t offer that customisability. It’s fantastic how much we can configure the system to match our processes; we’ve also learnt better ways of doing things when the tool has not been configurable to match our existing processes. You should never be required to change your processes because of a system’s restrictions or inflexibility – Ciphre has the perfect balance,” says Walsham.

Customer success story

Kiwi Power

“Ciphr’s onboarding feature also set it apart; I liked that new starters could access the platform before they became an employee – that they could sign their contract electronically, and view information about the company such as an office floorplan and a welcome video from the CEO. These users can easily be converted into a ‘normal’ Ciphr user and gain access to the full system on their first day.”

She adds: “It was also really important to me that we chose a product that was implemented by its owner – including all aspects of the build. With Kiwi’s finance system, the consultancy was done by a third-party company, and we didn’t get the best result. I really liked the fact that the Ciphr consultancy would be done by Ciphr.”

Walsham also secured independent validation of her choice of HR system provider at a system-selection workshop, hosted by experts Silver Cloud HR and sponsored by Ciphr. “I didn’t want to make the wrong decision for the company; I didn’t want to just go with the provider I liked and it not be right for Kiwi Power as whole. Ciphr absolutely ticked all the boxes that the Silver Cloud experts said a good HR system should tick; their advice was totally independent so that seminar gave me a lot of confidence that I’d made the right decision.”

‘Working remotely has actually made it easier to roll out Ciphr’

After waiting two years for the green light to purchase an HR solution, Walsham was keen to press ahead with Ciphr’s implementation and a Spring 2020 launch. Supporting the project has been a range of Ciphr staff – including project managers, implementation consultants, and account managers – all of whom have been “fantastic and understanding” in their responsiveness and support, she says.

“We’ve loved working with [implementation consultant] Nessa [Coker],” says Walsham. “One of the things that made her stand out for me was her previous experience as an HR manager and consultant. Nessa is not just a technical consultant – she understands the HR processes, too. Her background makes her the perfect person for this job. She got us, she got our team, she was professional but relaxed – entirely in keeping with how we work. She’s intuitively made suggestions and was forward-thinking stuff for us, which has made the whole process really enjoyable. Our experience with Nessa has been superb.”

Also guiding Kiwi Power through the project has been account development manager Katie Reis, who initially met with the team back in 2017. “Katie’s been so patient with us,” says Walsham. “We got on so well, and I feel she is emotionally invested in us as a customer. We like that she’s come on the whole journey with us – even doing our buy-in sessions for team. Her demonstration to them of what Ciphr can do was seamless, and perfectly timed and delivered to help us secure that buy-in and show how easy the system is to use.”

Ciphr’s launch has come at a time when Kiwi Power – like so many organisations in the UK – has switched to fully remote working. “I thought it was going to make the roll-out harder, but it’s actually made it easier,” says Walsham. “So far we’ve had very few complaints and haven’t really hit any problems with the system itself; issues have so far centred on the accuracy of our existing data, and users not reading guidance or understanding their role to play in our processes – but that’s for us to resolve.”

Customer success story

Kiwi Power

The biggest challenge for Kiwi Power's small HR team will be encouraging cultural change, and getting line leaders on board with the idea of taking on more of the traditional HR administrative responsibilities, such as approving and monitoring annual leave and certifying short-term sickness. "Our line leaders rely on us a lot, so that change is going to take some time," she says. "We also need to help them understand the value of the HR insight and reporting that we will be able to extract from Ciph. I'm super passionate about HR insights – I just need to convince everyone else now. Ciph is a business enabler, and it's up to us as an organisation to get fully on board with it now."

'The future of HR at Kiwi looks very different because of Ciph'

While Walsham says that implementing Ciph two years ago – back when Kiwi Power began its HR software search – would have "helped shape the organisation", she admits that, without the cultural change that's happened since then – and the arrival of Kiwi's new CEO – "I don't think Ciph would have worked as well as it does now. It would always have been well received and needed, but we're probably in a better place [culturally]."

Now the organisation has gone live with central HR data management and employee self-service, Walsham and Stewart are turning their attention to implementing additional elements of Ciph's functionality – and understanding how the system can help them tackle other business challenges such as reporting, onboarding, policy control and acceptance, and occupational health and safety requirements.

"In the next sixth months, we want to get management reporting set up; enable automatic workflow notifications and reminders; and get our onboarding portal up and running," says Walsham. "By the end of 2020, I want to be able to talk about the success of this functionality; about how Ciph is helping to welcome new starters into the business, or the insight we're getting from bespoke reporting, or the amount of time we've saved each month on payroll administration."

She adds: "The future in terms of HR processes at Kiwi looks very, very different because of Ciph. We'll be using the checks module to track the completion of right-to-work checks and display screen equipment (DSE) workstation assessments. These are elements we have to demonstrate to our ISO 9001 and ISO 45001 auditors, who'll next visit us in summer 2020; it'll be great to be able to show this information to them in a far more efficient way than we have previously, and be able to talk about what we hope to achieve by the 2021 audit. We're also looking into achieving ISO 27001 accreditation, and our scoping exercise for that flagged that we should use an HR portal for data rather than Dropbox or Excel.

"Ciph has the ability to do so much – it's just us that are holding it back. HR teams who are thinking about introducing new HR software should consider if their organisational culture is going to make that process harder or easier. You might want to work on improving your culture first, or else implementing change might be difficult."