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## Podcast Inside SAP S/4HANA - Transcription

Episode 90: Holidu and all4cloud's successful journey to SAP S/4HANA Cloud, public edition



**Yannick:** Welcome to our podcast Inside SAP S/4HANA. There is no customer success without product success and project success. I'm Yannick Peterschmitt. I'm the head of Enablement in Cloud ERP Product Success with SAP. And I'm here today for a great podcast with Anna Westacott from holiday and Christoph Keppler from our partner all4cloud. They will give us a little insight on their SAP S/4HANA Cloud journey. Anna, Christoph, warm welcome.

**Anna:** Thank you.

**Christoph:** Thank you.

**Yannick:** Anna let's start with you. Who are you exactly, and what is your function at holiday?

**Anna:** I'm the team lead for finance operations at holiday. Maybe not self-explanatory what the role is, but our finance operations team. When I joined the company back in summer 2019, we were two people, but now we're 11 great talented individuals and we handle all of the payment operations for the holiday group and that's everything relating to our business model. So that's all payment aspects of our in-house systems that make sure that we charge our guests correctly, that we make payments to our partners or hosts who offer properties with us and make sure they get paid correctly and critically for this project. We make sure that everything that happens outside of our ERP system ends up in the right place and correctly posted into our ERP system at the end of the day.

**Yannick:** Thank you, Anna. I think you mentioned the holiday group and many people would know holiday as the vacation portal. For those who don't, would you like to tell us more about the company? What kind of company is holiday? What service do you offer? Who are the typical customers of holiday?

**Anna:** We operate as two businesses as holiday. So under the brand holiday it's a classic vacation rental platform for guests, so for booking vacation rentals. And then we also have a brand Bookiply where we provide private hosts with a powerful software, with also support from local teams who support those property owners. And the idea with Bookiply that we help single property owners to generate more bookings for their properties with less effort and we create a reliably great experience for our guests. We're based in Munich and we've currently got about 20 offices around Europe.

**Yannick:** And for being a customer, I confirm that I love the platform. Thanks, Anna. We are also happy to have Christoph from all4cloud here with us today. Christoph, can you please introduce yourself briefly and of course tell us a few words about all4cloud? What is your function at the company and what is the company doing? What's the focus?

**Christoph:** I am Christoph, Christoph Keppler from all4cloud. I'm on board since last year, and I'm responsible for the S/4HANA consulting team here in our organization. I have a long journey together and through the SAP world with different positions. I have been working in the SAP environment since 2006 as a consultant project lead and business unit manager in different industries and with different customers. To all4cloud, we are a cloud company 100%. We are located in Germany and in Switzerland. In Germany we have near Walldorf, our headquarter in Viernheim and in Switzerland at the seaside of the local lake here in Switzerland, in Cham. We are a gold partner from SAP and we specialize in leading Cloud

ERP solutions from SAP, especially the two products the product Business ByDesign and S/4HANA Cloud, public edition. That means we are really pure focused on Cloud solutions. We help the companies to achieve operational excellence and to master the go live of their SAP Cloud ERP solutions. And that with standard ERP system without any customizations like developments or other extensibility. In addition, we offer proprietary solutions for industry specific requirements. This includes the mobile warehouse and production report apps, for cloud and the solution extension for maintenance and service, the EAM for Cloud solution from us. More than 300 mid-sized company trust us and work with us in a partnership and we cooperate with these customers. We are convinced about our customers with our elaborate understanding of processes, expertise in each and every industry and a unique cloud DNA.

**Yannick:** I really like this unique selling point. You are Cloud native, which says a lot about the mindset that is needed for Cloud project. And this is a good way actually to deep dive right into today's main topic, holidu's journey with SAP Cloud Public Edition. Of course, holidu is not a stranger to SAP. Holidu is not stranger to all4cloud, since you guys have been working together in the past. So Anna, can you please tell us a little more about when holidu was founded, how it was developed over the years, and what challenges you faced during the company's development and growth? Which will bring us, of course, to the IT needs that you have in the later part of the discussion.

**Anna:** Holidu was founded in 2014 by two German brothers, Johannes and Michael Siebers, and they came up with the idea of holidu when they were searching for beach house rentals in Portugal for their own vacation. And they spent days trying to find and book suitable accommodation and were asking themselves why it's so difficult to find a vacation rental when booking your hotels or flights is so easy. They discovered that the market for vacation rentals was very fragmented and that's where the idea for holidu came from and how the booking platform was built. And the idea is to allow users to find and book all vacation rental offers in a single destination on one website. And come 2017, that's where the Bookiply brand that I mentioned before came in. And Johannes and Michael also discovered that many vacation rental homes don't have up to date availability or can't be booked online, which is where they saw the opportunity for Bookiply and created the company as a 100% subsidiary of holidu, to support private home owners in renting and hosting their properties. And in terms of scale, right now, Bookiply is already managing more than 25,000 properties and is a market leader in several European destinations. So since 2014 through 2017 to now, we've grown extremely quickly, both in terms of the volumes that we're dealing with, the number of bookings, the number of property owners that we work with, but also in terms of the markets we're operating in.

**Anna:** So we've expanded to new regions across Europe and are continuing to do that. And so that's obviously been a natural challenge for us. We also have a lot of tech systems which we've built in-house. We have a large tech team of developers and designers who have worked to build our own systems and they give us great flexibility to meet the needs. But then we have the challenge of then integrating those and working with those alongside our ERP system. We've extended our product offerings, so we're often needing to develop new features and tools to support the products that we want to offer to our customers. And again, that means our systems have to be able to keep pace with that, and that's a constant challenge for us to keep the development moving as quickly as we want to move the business forward. One challenge that we probably shouldn't overlook was the pandemic. So

in 2020, we had the same challenges faced by many companies, which meant we had to come up with new ways of working. But we also had to adapt our business model to suit the kind of pandemic and our post-pandemic world.

**Yannick:** Super interesting. Thanks for the insight, Anna. This sounds like a great success story already. And of course, as an SAP employee, I'm looking forward to understand how has SAP streamlined the digitalization processes over the journey?

**Anna:** I think the key part for us has been the integration possibility. We have, as I mentioned, lots of kind of pre systems which we've built ourselves or used other tools for. And it's for the volumes of data that we're using, it's critical for us that we can integrate those and have a seamless process of data flowing from one system to another. And SAP has been critical in making that happen for us and allowing us to grow as we have wanted to, without having issues and problems because of the data that we want to transfer and making sure that it's as accurate as possible through the systems we have.

**Yannick:** Great. So I understand that you've implemented SAP ByDesign first, right? So how did the SAP solution accompany the company and support the business growth you've already mentioned?

**Anna:** It was back in 2018 that we implemented SAP Business Bydesign and we at the time were looking for something which would be scalable for us as a business and would be flexible enough to meet all of our business requirements, as well as providing the integrations that I mentioned to our pre systems. One of the reasons that's so critical is that we want to automate those processes as much as possible and have as little manual intervention. So those integrations make it possible. We needed to have flexibility in the system, which SAP Business ByDesign offered us, to make sure we could handle the changes and developments to our business model we were making as they happened. With SAP Business ByDesign, we were able to handle our growing volumes successfully. We went from 2017 where we had very few team members, we had very few bookings. It was the end of last year when we started to make the move to S/4HANA, but to that point where we were able to handle all of those volumes and all of the changes that we needed to make with SAP Business ByDesign.

**Yannick:** Christoph, I believe all4cloud has been supporting holidu on their Cloud ERP journey right from the start, from day one. Can you tell us a little bit about the relationship between the two companies, between all4cloud and holidu? How has that relation changed over the last years?

**Christoph:** We first met in the end of 2017 and start with the implementation project in 2018. As mentioned from Anna, holidu is a really fast growing company that faced with many different challenges, for example, the management of more than 100 partnerships and more than 10,000 international customers, more than 1,000 invoices per month, a large number of new customers every day. The complete overview and integration across different payment models and the currencies in the different countries and the scalable and flexible accounting system, and the combination between the pre systems from holidu, the portals in the Internet and the combination between both systems and integration to a backbone. We are very happy to help out by implementing SAP Business ByDesign, which was the perfect solution and the backbone for holidu. And they can use Business Bydesign as the

backbone system and the ERP system with finance and controlling and billing functionalities. This is a major advantage for the connection of holidu pre systems and internet portals via standard interfaces, the so-called SAP APIs. And that's a great chance and positive integration between the pre systems and SAP as a backbone system. And the changes are now that, through the fast growing of the company of holidu, we get more stuff in the systems and we have a lot of data in the systems and it's a little bit outgrowing. We decided in the end of last year to change the systems and go to more scalable systems. About the data volume, we decided together with holidu to implement S/4HANA public cloud solution and make a project together also with support from your colleagues from SAP and make a change from BYD and migrate to S/4HANA Public Cloud.

**Yannick:** We will talk a bit detailed about this topic of outgrowing the system in a minute. But as said, in the relations, you are always at least two, and I would like to ask you, Anna, what do you think is the main advantage of having a partner on your side?

**Anna:** Internally at holidu, we have a very highly skilled team of product managers, developers, designers, among other skill areas. But we don't have anyone in our team who has an in-depth knowledge of SAP. So someone who really understands how the system works, what it offers, how it should be configured. And that's where we look to a partner who can provide this insight and can really help advise us on how we can get the most out of the system. To be honest, I think we'd be a bit lost without that. So it might be support with advising us on how to streamline existing processes or giving us ideas about how we could implement new ones. And it would be really hard to do without an SAP expert, in our case, all4cloud, who know the functionalities of SAP inside out and who can really help us with providing the information and the guidance on how best to use it.

**Yannick:** I think this is already a compliment for you, Christoph, and the team. Great to hear! Anna, in what area would you say all4cloud was able to help you very specifically along the project?

**Anna:** I think a critical area was really taking time to understand our needs and really talk to us about what we use the system, what we want to use it for in the future, where we're having difficulties or where we were previously having difficulties that we wanted to resolve, and then taking those requirements and mapping them to what could be offered by SAP. So how it could meet them, identifying areas as well where it might not be possible. We might have to think of another way of doing something to what we're used to and to think a bit outside the box. And then also providing support with configuration and with integrations. As I've said a couple of times from our pre systems are so important and helping to set those up and make sure that they're working and tested. And then I guess another area is specifically in developing additional tools or reports for us, which we don't have as standard or which need someone with a bit more experience to put them together. That's something where all4cloud has supported us in the past and will continue too over the coming years hopefully.

**Yannick:** And how did the further service until the day of the implementation partner go for you?

**Anna:** So far, very good. So hopefully Christoph is glad to hear that, too. And so, yeah, we've been working together since 2018 and we know holidu can rely on all4cloud, our

implementation partner for support where it's needed. I think Christoph would probably agree that we've challenged them sometimes, whether it's with the requirements that we have or the timelines that we have for wanting to get things done quickly. But yeah, they've always responded well to these requests and helped us to keep moving forward because we've wanted to. So supporting the growth of our business.

**Yannick:** Awesome and honestly, from a vendor perspective is great to hear about those strong partnership between our customers and partners. So thank you Anna for mentioning all that. It's great to hear that all4cloud and holidu continue to work together after the first successful implementation of SAP ByDesign. So Christoph, what was the reason for the renewed cooperation with holidu? How did you approach these concerns? Because of course, Anna said they challenged you from time to time, but still you wanted to continue, go to the next level with them. Tell us more.

**Christoph:** Fortunately, holidu is grown more and more. The business is growing, the number of customers is growing, the number of bookings are growing. All is growing up and is growing faster than expected. Although SAP Business ByDesign was able to functionality deliver everything that was needed for the further growth, we have reached some limits in terms of data volume and we have huge numbers of invoices every month, large numbers of clearing positions in the bank accounting. We need a little bit more performance in the systems with this data volume and these are the outgoings in the existing system. And so we decide to switch to S/4HANA Cloud, public edition in order to be able to manage the higher data volume and the higher load and to have it securely with the volume and can handle it. That were the reason why we changed from BYD to S/4HANA Public Cloud. Also to expand into some subsidiary from holidu to Italy. That was the next step in further projects to expand the company codes in the system. Go to Italy, go to Spain and bring in the other subsidiaries from holidu into the system and make some things like consolidation in the system and other things what we thought about.

**Yannick:** Very clear statement. Let's change the perspective on the same question. Anna, of course, what is your point of view? What was the main reason for switching from SAP ByDesign to SAP S/4HANA Cloud, public edition?

**Anna:** So I think I would mirror what Christoph had just said, that it was around data volumes. So I said before that SAP Business ByDesign was able to offer us the functionality we needed with our growing data volumes. But given the point we've grown to now and where we've forecast ourselves being in the next one to three years, we decided to make the move now to make the jump and move across to S/4HANA before we started to see real problems with data volumes in Business ByDesign we decided to take the move earlier to make sure that we didn't encounter any major problems. We're pushing thousands of transactions into SAP every week from our pre systems and that will just only increase. So we wanted to make sure that we have a future proof solution which can handle everything that we throw at it in the future.

**Yannick:** That sounds, of course, very important for a growing company. Christoph, I'd like to talk a bit with you about the implementation process itself. Can you give us a little insight on the journey? What milestone have been reached out so far and how?

**Christoph:** First of all, we started with the kick off in October. We have some preparations then and we prepared the project and drew a plan for the implementation. We take some accelerators from the SAP Activate methodology. And you from the SAP organization serve some accelerators in kind of Excel sheets and other tools that we can use in our project and that helps us to plan the project in detail. This took place in the prepare phase. We are oriented on the face model of the Activate methodology and therefore we use all the steps here and the phases. Then we successfully detailed our plan more and more. Our processes should be mapped and we have to define all the processes and interfaces that we need to bring the platforms from holidu together with the S/4HANA Cloud system. And these interfaces need to be redesigned to correct and to bring the new parameters in the interfaces and change some things in the flows in the APIs. Then we have to make some changes at the outgoing forms. We send all the documents out of S/4HANA via email. We do not use any printer or print outs. We only use the email functionality of S/4HANA and send out all the documents to the customer directly via email and email addresses. Therefore, we prepared the templates for the forms and in the meantime we gave holidu the chance to have a look of a cloud system, the test system, because in that time we do not have a holidu system installed for them. So we carried out some tests and first tests together with holidu on our test system. We configure company code for them in the system and then they can book and make some processes in the test system from our side. This happened in the explore phase to understand the processes, how they works, the differences between the old system and up to the new system from BYD to S/4HANA, where are the differences, how to handle it and so on. And then we set up the S/4HANA Public Cloud system for holidu. It's 3-system-landscape, it's development system, test system and productive system. And there we carried out all the necessary configurations and the system grew day by day. Every day we have an increasing configuration on the system and then we test all the configurations that we carried out in the system landscape for holidu and the test system had done a good job here. Indeed, and more and more interfaces have been implemented via APIs to S/4HANA. We realized the interfaces with all the standard APIs from the API catalog, from SAP, we do some mappings and bring in some things in the API platform, in the cloud platform integration so we can cover all the interfaces from holidu from their pre system integrated into the S/4HANA Cloud system. And realize face became fuller and fuller of tasks. So all the things are done in the project in the realization phase and we bring all stuff here in from the forms to the interfaces to the processes in the finance, in the bank accounting and so on. We migrate the data, the business partners, the postings, the supplier data, all the assets and the asset postings and all what's necessary to go forward in the new S/4HANA Cloud system. Then in the deploy and run phase, all the necessary settings were transported into the productive systems. The users were created on the production system and the start signal was given. So after four and a half months we had it for the go live with a detailed cut over plan. Everything was planned in detail in our cut over plan based on days, and we have a detailed plan and we follow this detailed plan and with minor adjustments when something went a little bit in another direction, then we make some corrections. But we Go live in March with the first master data and first interfaces and bookings and the further steps we take in the course of March and April and in mid of April all data was in the new S/4HANA Public Cloud system. And so the system worked and we are very happy.

**Yannick:** And so am I, and so are all of those people here and hopefully those listening in to. Great success stories! Can you give a little insight on the implementation process? So let's say the tip and advice after so many months that you would like to share for other

customers or other partners, just thinking about, you know, jumping to the public cloud, what would that be, Christoph?

**Christoph:** The several important factors to consider are to understand and analyze the business requirements, to identify the specific functionalities that we need for the business of the customer and to create a clear list of these requirements, how to cover or to follow up to meet them in the future and to cover them in the project. Then the scalability and flexibility of the Cloud ERP solution should help us and should be given to us the ability to add new users, to add new features or to add new interfaces, for example, because we need some more interfaces in the future at the holidu site to integrate more and more the 3-systems from holidu. It's also a big thing here to check the opportunities of the interface. You met always in such projects heterogeneous system landscape and so you have to develop some interfaces to integrate in this existing landscape. And these are the challenges you have there. And so to check at the beginning of the project, how can you cover the interfaces with the existing APIs from the API hub from SAP.

**Yannick:** As we're coming to an end, I would like to take a look at the future, obviously, with you, Anna. What are the next goals for holidu? What forecast can you give and what business areas will become even more important for holidu in the future?

**Anna:** Holidu raised last year a successful series funding round where we raised €100 million. And that will fuel our growth and our expansion to local office locations over the coming months and years. It will unlock organic and inorganic growth for us in our markets and allow us to really invest in additional product offerings and making our platforms even stronger. And that will support us to achieve our mission, which is to make the booking and hosting of holidu homes free of doubt and full of joy. And in terms of the impact for us and my area as a finance team, I think the rollout to more office locations will bring some challenges where SAP can support us. As Christoph mentioned, that might be in integrating those office operations into our SAP system, which we don't currently do. It also might mean that we have potential for challenges dealing with different currencies and all of the associated issues and difficulties that come along with that. And I think that's where S/4HANA and all4cloud will support us. As mentioned a few times, we expect to see ongoing significant growth, which is only going to multiply the challenges we've faced in the past. But we feel that we're in a good position with S/4HANA and again with our partnership with all4cloud to handle these and to be successful in the future.

**Yannick:** Awesome. That sounds great! And we're looking forward to seeing these new product and to watch your company continue to grow, obviously. Christoph, anything you'd like to add? To help me close this podcast?

**Christoph:** There are some points now in addition to the project and the project phases to be considered at the beginning of the project. Make a clear plan, iterate and improve it every day or every week. List your open points and check them every day. Don't wait on the others. Put all your responsibilities on both sides and clear the responsibilities. It's a teamwork, customer and partner. It's a cooperation and not a consumer project. To give the party time to check and investigate and understand the business case and the business process, some things are not so trivial. Last but not least, you need the endurance and reliability. These are the important factors here in the project. It's not a 100 meter run. It's a 25 kilometer run. Do



it with fun. This takes time. And so the three letters from SAP in my project also mentioned that in the past, in German words, it means: Spaß am Projekt, have a fun with the project.

**Yannick:** Very good, clear words. Nothing to add, I would say. Thanks, Christoph, for closing like that. Clear call to actions and great to feel the motivation that you and the team had brought on the table to help Anna and holidu, support their growth. Thank you both very much for sharing your experience with our listeners. Thanks also to our audience, of course, for being with us again. Feel free to send us email via [insides4@sap.com](mailto:insides4@sap.com). Share your opinion with us on this episode. Share your ideas for the next podcast episode eventually, and of course tune in next time and be Inside S/4HANA. Thank you and goodbye!

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