



# Transforming HR Aventum's Journey to a Modern HRIS Solution

**How Tugela People helped  
Aventum transition from manual  
processes to seamless HR  
integration to support rapid growth**

## The Client

### The need for a new HRIS system: What prompted the change?

**Aventum is a rapidly growing reinsurance business with 18 offices globally. Employing over 500 employees with double digit growth planned over the next three years. To support this growth Aventum required a more effective way of managing their people throughout the employee journey.**

The first time Aventum approached Tugela People was through a website enquiry in July 2023 from Neil Milner, Chief People Officer, saying, "Global Business with circa 400 staff. Looking to implement a Global HR system (HRIS etc.). Currently using multiple systems and numerous spreadsheets".

After an initial discussion to gain a better understanding of Aventum's business requirements with Thomas Schilling, the Commercial Director at Tugela People, Neil was introduced to John Brownhill, an independent HR Consultant with People & Technologies.

The main driver for the project was to introduce a modern HRIS to support efficient recruitment with faster time to hire, a better candidate and onboarding experience, streamlined HR processes, more accurate information for decision making, a move to a performance management culture and an efficient annual review process. The systems and processes in place did not provide the functionality to enable this transformation, and Aventum needed a partner who understood HR processes and the HR technology market to support the decision-making process.

A V E N T U M

**Tugela**  
PEOPLE

## The Aventum Journey

**In collaboration with People & Technologies, Aventum engaged Tugela People to offer independent advice and oversee the procurement process.**

The project kicked off in October 2023 with a strategy and process review, comparing best practices to existing workflows to create a system specification. This review involved key strategic personnel at Aventum, including Neil Milner, Jonathan Sparham (Head of HR Functions), Karen Cant (Head of People Partners), Ali Foroshani (Head of Talent), Demi Starck (Head of Payroll), and Kerry Hurst (Group Head of HR Operations).

In November 2023, vendors were invited to submit proposals, and a scoring system was used to shortlist three. These vendors then presented their solutions based on a standard set of scenarios, allowing for a fair, like-for-like comparison. After evaluating the options, a preferred vendor was selected, followed by due diligence, implementation planning, and final contract negotiations.

Tugela People was part of the successful Sage proposal, and following the vendor selection, they were contracted to implement the Sage People system in March 2024. People & Technologies supported the implementation as the Project Advisor, working alongside Kerry Hurst, Aventum Project Manager, to ensure the project was delivered on time and within budget.

The project kicked off in early April 2024, going live with core functionality in August, followed by performance management in September. Tugela People is responsible for delivering the system, while People & Technologies manages the implementation for Aventum. The applicant tracking system is set to go live in early 2025, with the annual compensation cycle to be managed via Sage People in the summer.

## The Brief

# The Solution

## Leading Aventum's HRIS transformation

Kerry Hurst, who has been with Aventum Group for almost five years and is now their Group Head of HR Operations, was previously the company's Credit Control Manager.

In August 2023, Neil Milner invited Kerry to take on the role of Project Manager for this high-risk project. Since the project began in November 2023, Kerry has played a pivotal role in managing the selection, adoption, and implementation of the new system, successfully steering the entire process.

For this case study, we interviewed Kerry to gain a deeper understanding of her experience throughout

the entire project. She shared her insights on the process, highlighting the key stages, challenges, and successes. Kerry also provided valuable feedback on working with Tugela People, offering a perspective on the collaboration, the support provided, and how it influenced the project's overall success. Kerry's input was instrumental in shaping a comprehensive view of the project and its outcome.



Kerry Hurst, Group Head of HR Operations, Aventum

## What were the driving factors behind the need for change?

When asked about the main reasons Aventum sought an HRIS, Kerry explained,

**“Aventum has experienced rapid growth over the past two to three years. When I joined, we had around 80 employees, and now there are over 500! Historically, everything HR-related was managed manually on spreadsheets, which led to, missing data, and a significant amount of time and frustration trying to extract data from countless files. Eventually, Neil made the call that it was time for a full HRIS system.”**

Kerry added, “We were using a payroll system and a few other modules from the same supplier, but these still required spreadsheets since they didn't fully meet our needs. Our performance management was also manual, and while we later transferred it to an in-house system, it still fell short of what we needed. Implementing an HRIS presented an opportunity to manage all our people-related data in one centralised place—a single, reliable source of truth with accurate data that we could easily report on.”

Aventum is already experiencing the benefits of the new HRIS. Kerry shared, “Previously, bonus reviews required weekly data extraction and constant updates due to rapid changes, making it a laborious task and challenging to verify accuracy. Now, we can simply generate a report in under two minutes!”

## What led Aventum to select the Sage People HRIS over the other recommended options for an HRIS provider?

“I believe we reviewed six systems in total. We ruled out two or three fairly early on because, once we shared our initial requirements, it was clear they didn't meet our needs.”

Internally, there was some debate, almost generational. Many of us from the older generation preferred Sage People because of its strong dashboard, comprehensive reporting, and overall ease of use. Meanwhile, the younger team members were more drawn to another system

From a business perspective, that system felt overly social media-oriented, which we thought could polarise opinions within the company, potentially affecting engagement. It was also quite costly for what it offered, and its recruitment module, which we were among the first to see, felt very clunky. In contrast, Sage People already had a well-established system ready for quick implementation and provided the support we needed through Tugela People, which the other system didn't offer.

Another option we looked at was impressive but fell just short of the support we needed for such a complex system going forward.

Having Tugela People present at the initial Sage People demo was a bit unexpected—we thought,

**“Wait, why are you here? We didn't invite you!”. However, once we understood that they were there to offer support and had a long-term plan to partner with us in implementing and scaling the system as we grow, it was very reassuring. We didn't have experience with Salesforce, and the learning curve has been steep. However, with Tugela People's support, navigating this learning curve has been much easier.”**



# The Results

## How have Tugela People made a difference?

Kerry shared, “Beyond the team’s expertise and experience, having a dedicated point of contact has been invaluable. Although we reach out to various team members, knowing there are consistent touch points has been a comfort.

We almost see it as a safety net, helping us navigate and understand the system. Everyone on the team is incredibly knowledgeable, and the Lead Project Manager at Tugela People has been fantastic. Early on, we had a minor setback that initially created some challenges, but once we got through it, things improved. It was early in our partnership, and while it affected our timelines, the experience ultimately strengthened our collaboration.

Now that we understand each others working styles and the Tugela People team knows our complex business needs, the process flows really well”.

When asked to describe her relationship with Tugela People, Kerry said,

“**We have a collaborative, easy-going partnership—not in a laid-back way, but with a natural, open flow that works well for us. I’m not overly formal myself, and their approachable, knowledgeable team makes everything feel straightforward. They’ve helped bridge our knowledge gaps seamlessly, and every team member has been supportive, professional, and easy to work with.**



## What about your ongoing relationship with the Tugela People team?

**We have a clear structure in place: a Lead Project Manager overseeing project management, a Customer Success Manager for our monthly check-ins, an HRIS Apprentice from within the Managed Services team for support, and a Commercial Director for any new implementations. Knowing exactly who to reach out to for each area has really streamlined our communication and improved our working relationship. This setup is much more efficient than going through a central mailbox and waiting for uncertain updates on a ticket. We truly appreciate this approach!**

My regular, scheduled check-ins with Kate Scott, Customer Success Manager for Tugela People, are brief but comprehensive. We discuss whether anything is missing, if there’s additional support needed, and if Kate needs to step in to resolve any issues. These check-ins cover everything. It’s also helpful to have that guidance. With so many parties involved—such as our internal team, Sage People, and Tugela People—it’s reassuring to have Kate to turn to when we’re uncertain. If I have a problem but am unsure where it fits or if it’s something I can handle on my own, Kate will guide me. For instance, she might suggest that I search online for a solution instead of escalating it for support. Having that independent voice helps point us in the right direction while we’re still getting acclimated”.

When asked about Tugela People’s relationship with Avenium, Kate said, “Our structured approach to client support is designed to make everything easier and more efficient, so I’m delighted to hear it’s working well for them. By ensuring clear points of contact—whether

it’s for project management, check-ins, or technical support—our goal is to provide a smoother, more efficient experience. Regular, focused check-ins give us the chance to tackle questions directly and offer guidance. Ultimately, I want clients to feel empowered in managing their HR systems and confident in our partnership as they work toward their goals. I’m thrilled that our relationship is helping Avenium navigate complex needs and stay connected to the right support at the right time”.

Kerry went on to say, “This is going to be a strong and successful relationship moving forward. As we near the end of the recruitment build and prepare for talent, the only remaining component is compensation. Now, it’s about finalising details and exploring additional system functionalities that were set aside to focus on our main priority, HCM. Having the flexibility to pause certain parts of the system until we’re ready has been incredibly helpful.

We appreciate Tugela People’s guidance. Initially, we insisted on fitting the system to our processes despite their advice to the contrary. When things didn’t go as expected, some felt Tugela People should have pushed harder—but they had already highlighted the potential issues. We’ve learned valuable lessons and now see that the system is designed to meet specific needs, making it easier to adapt our processes rather than forcing the system to fit them.”

The lead Project Manager at Tugela People said, “It’s been a bit of a roller coaster, but a fun one. There have been some challenges, but both teams have worked well together, communicated effectively, and the end result has been successful. Kerry is very positive about the system and its implementation, and I think the project outcome reflects that. Every project has its ups and downs, and while we know there will be hurdles, the key is how we tackle them together. I feel the open communication and alignment between us has made a big difference”.





## What about the ongoing support provided by Tugela People?

“From the outset, Tugela People has been very clear about the support they would provide, even during the initial demo, where Sage outlined how Tugela People would assist us. This became a key part of the sales pitch and what we could expect for our investment. Initially, after going live with HCM, we considered hiring someone to manage the system. However, the support package we received worked out well for us. As the system grows, we may explore a monthly support plan, but for now, buying support in bundles seems to be the most effective approach.”



Mac (Macaulay) Smith, HRIS Apprentice at Tugela People, has been excellent—always quick to respond when we have an issue. I’ve often found that after emailing him and discussing the problem, I end up discovering the solution myself—his expertise seems to point me in the right direction. Mac is very knowledgeable about the system and is always willing to work through the details with me to identify the issue and resolve it.

I’ve started to step back a bit with some of the issues I’ve been trying to resolve myself, realising that it’s something Mac could likely fix far faster than I can. As we move forward, we’ll continue to assess how

much support we need, but I do believe this will be a long-term partnership. At this point, I don’t see the need to hire someone to replace the support we’re getting from Tugela People. If the support is working well, there’s no reason to change it.”

Mac said, “It’s been great working with Kerry—she’s really eager to learn and get a handle on the resolution process. She’s focused on finding solutions and making sure she can handle similar issues on her own down the line. There’s a lot of learning alongside the configuration, which makes it a smooth process”.

## The Future Outlook

Aventum’s partnership with Tugela People has been instrumental in their successful transition to a modern, integrated HRIS system. By addressing the challenges of rapid growth and manual processes, the collaboration has not only streamlined HR operations but also set the foundation for scalable, data-driven decision-making.

Kerry said, “We truly appreciate Tugela People’s guidance. They’ve helped bridge our knowledge gaps seamlessly, and every team member has been supportive, professional, and easy to work with. Through tailored support, expert guidance, and a commitment to understanding Aventum’s unique needs, Tugela People has become the trusted partner in our HR transformation journey. As Aventum continues to grow, the flexible, future-proof system will empower the company to adapt and thrive, with Tugela People by our side to ensure ongoing success”.

## Contact Us

To find out more about Tugela People’s [HRIS Consultancy Services](#) or to discuss your requirements, please contact us:

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