

# The Right Path to Global Growth

How Acquia — a SaaS provider — leveraged the expertise of HSP Group to rethink its international expansion strategy



# The Right Path to Global Growth

Expanding overseas is so much more than finding the right talent. With global growth comes a myriad of questions: What does the optimal path to global success really look like? Should you set up an entity or find an Employer of Record (EOR) provider? Is hiring in Country A easier than hiring in Country B? What is the gap in your team's knowledge and how can you bridge it?

It's true, you don't know what you don't know! Global growth creates a raft of challenges bespoke to each company's growth plans.

This is where an expert strategic partner plays such a crucial role. **The right partner can help you shape the most optimal path to make the journey quicker and easier.**

When Acquia reached out to HSP Group for help, the Boston-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) provider had outgrown its global payroll solutions. But what did the way forward look like? As HSP began scoping, Acquia quickly realized there were more gaps to fill than a payroll revamp. In short, they didn't know what they didn't know — until HSP uncovered the company's true needs. Rather than just tapping into an isolated service, Acquia now leverages the full breadth of HSP's global expertise to drive growth holistically.

This is how the partnership evolved and the benefits that Acquia reaped as a result.

# The Acquia Story

[Acquia](#) is a SaaS provider based in Boston with over 800 employees across the globe. The Acquia digital experience platform (DXP) was built around Drupal, an open source content management system, to give enterprise companies one central hub from which to create, manage, deliver, and optimize content-driven experiences across all digital channels. In 2019, Vista Equity Partners purchased Acquia in a deal valued at \$1 billion, positioning the company for significant growth.

Before Acquia hired HSP as its strategic growth partner, the company's initial approach to global expansion had resulted in a variety of solutions in different countries that were becoming increasingly difficult to manage. While each solution at one point served Acquia well, the company's immediate needs rather than a long-term, holistic strategy had shaped decisions. The company faced challenges in the following areas:

- **Employer of Record**
- **Contractors**
- **Payroll Solutions**
- **Human Resources**
- **Accounting**



**Employer of Record (EOR)** In several countries, Acquia relied on an EOR solution by a well-known global service provider. This setup was a natural choice during the early expansion phase, but as the company grew, the mounting cost inefficiencies and lack of flexibility became impossible to overlook. The company needed a more robust solution.

**Contractors:** In other countries, Acquia pursued a contract model. HSP later discovered the company would be better off categorizing the contractors as ‘employees’ as part of an entity (more on this topic below).

**Payroll solutions:** As the company grew, so did the number of payroll providers in different countries. The piecemeal approach brought a range of inefficiencies. Since each vendor had only a sliver of the full business, Acquia had less negotiation leverage should issues come up. The lack of a cohesive standard across providers also made global payroll consistency unnecessarily complex. To compound the challenges, none of the providers offered more than payroll, leaving Acquia to search for a strategic partner who could advise them on what they needed to consider and the actions they needed to take, alongside a comprehensive service suite to be able to deliver the agreed solutions.

**Human resources:** Acquia was quickly growing its presence in India. With more than 330 employees, the company did not have the local expertise to manage the volume of HR administration or wide range of inquiries. Outside expertise and assistance were required to swiftly navigate the complexities.

**Accounting:** Acquia had for years entrusted global accounting to a major specialized provider. But a few mishaps, as well as declining customer service, were making Acquia question whether it was still the right fit.

# Why Acquia Selected HSP

Acquia was familiar with several members of the HSP team and eager to work with them again. Said Caroline Painter, International Controller at Acquia:

“We were so excited to see the founding team of HSP come together back on the market, and it coincided with Acquia looking for a new International Payroll and Compliance Provider. After initial discussions, we were extremely impressed with the offering, the personal attention and the HSP team on our account. It was a no brainer for us – we were an HSP customer again.”



## The HSP Solution:

HSP initiated the engagement with a thorough assessment of Acquia’s entire organization. During the onboarding process, and in subsequent strategy sessions, HSP identified the issues that the company needed to solve as well as any missing gaps in services, compliance issues, or more technical requisites.

Then, HSP created tailored solutions based on country-specific demands while also offering recommendations on the overall growth strategy.

## During the initial scope, HSP took the following actions:

**Payroll consolidation:** HSP assumed responsibility for payroll in seven countries, addressing an employee population of around 420. The HSP solution replaced local providers and the EOR service.

**Entity establishment:** The proliferation of contractors required a mix of solutions. In New Zealand, for instance, HSP created an entity, completed employee registrations, and enrolled the employees in the country's social security program.

**HR administration:** Aside from taking over payroll from a specialized provider, HSP responded to the need for HR assistance in India by making an HR resource available at a key Acquia location two days a week. The HR resource was able to support Acquia with a suite of capabilities, from addressing onboarding and offboarding to fielding questions about the provident fund.

**Compliance:** Based on the gap analysis results, HSP implemented a solution to bring Acquia into compliance with Japanese employment law that requires all employers to track the time and attendance of their employees. In addition, HSP provided HR consultation to address outstanding questions and eventually added HR administration in Japan.

## In the subsequent scope, HSP turned the focus on global entity solutions:

**Last-mile accounting and entity compliance:** Following lackluster customer service, Acquia was eager to end the relationship with the global accounting provider in favor of HSP. Within the first year, HSP took over all activities related to last-mile accounting and entity compliance in seven countries.

HSP also introduced **GateWay**, its market-leading expansion platform, which replaced the dated legacy platform that Acquia had been using. Acquia is one of **GateWay's** earliest adopters and has played an active role in testing and representing the client journey.

# The Impact

For the first time in company history, Acquia now leverages the expertise and services of a single global provider, equipped to handle all of the company's people and entity needs. At every turn, Acquia can lean on HSP for expert support. The impact has been significant.



## Since partnering with HSP, Acquia has achieved:

- **Improved payroll accuracy, timeliness, and compliance**
- **Better data quality**
- **Standardized global processes**
- **A holistic approach to global growth**
- **Complete transparency via GateWay**

Rather than communicating with multiple providers across the globe, Acquia knows exactly where to turn for answers to even the most complex compliance and payroll questions. With in-depth knowledge of the overall global growth strategy, HSP can offer informed guidance on everything from high-level issues to the minutiae of international employment law.

As Acquia's strategic partner, HSP continuously evaluates the scope to maximize efficiencies, consolidate reporting, spot the gaps, and shape the services in accordance with the growth path. Acquia can also tap into GateWay to view payroll calendars, upcoming compliance deadlines, and other key pieces of information that enable the company to take a proactive approach to global expansion.

*“Since going live, our team has reported significant quality improvements and time efficiencies in the work we have received, along with a sense of comfort that our international entities are well looked after,” Painter said. “We look forward to building our relationship with HSP in the years ahead.”*

## Conclusion

The story of Acquia's expansion shows the value of finding an expert partner who can offer a holistic view of activities, regulations, and services across global markets to drive growth with purpose and forethought. While Acquia initially sought out HSP to create a more cohesive and manageable payroll approach, the engagement grew as the HSP team helped the SaaS provider discover what they – so to speak – didn't know they didn't know.

In such a complex environment, the partnership was just what Acquia needed to navigate everything from compliance and accounting to entity management and human resources. Now, HSP serves the role of Acquia's global growth partner, allowing the company to confidently and efficiently run and expand its multi-country footprint.

## About HSP Group

We facilitate disruptive and expert-led global expansion for companies, supporting their international operations with an unparalleled focus on the client experience. We are the only provider committed to delivering all the people and entity solutions you need, in every country throughout the world. Our technology, people, methodology, pricing, experience, and expertise, make the complex simple.

**GateWay** is our unique digital platform allowing clients, employees, and partners to access everything they need in every country they expand into.

**How can we help you? Please contact us at [contact@hsp.com](mailto:contact@hsp.com).**