



Western Process Controls (WPC)

| CASESTUDY |

WPC improves cash flow and reporting with Professional Advantage

Just over twenty years ago a small engineering company set-up in Western Australia (WA). Known as Western Process Controls (but most frequently referred to as WPC), the company's aim was to provide, calibrate, service and repair the high quality industrial process control equipment so essential for many of Western Australia's oil and gas companies.

As WA's resources industry grew over the subsequent years, WPC's business boomed too. From an initial staff of three and a turnover of just \$1 million, WPC now employs more than 50 people and the company is fast approaching \$30 million in annual turnover. Its clients include a "who's who" of the State's major resource companies.

Today, a wide range of industrial process controls equipment from complete valve automation systems to control panels are engineered and serviced by WPC. Through the sheer depth and breadth of its primary product range – Fisher Controls - and the careful selection of complementary agency lines, WPC offers the industry's largest range of products, services and complete valve solutions.

"Microsoft Dynamics is allowing us to really look at the performance of each individual division by revenue, cost, net margin or net profit. "



At a glance

Business Objective:

A single integrated business system capable of providing enhanced cash flow management and more comprehensive business-wide reporting and analysis.

Solution:

- Microsoft Dynamics GP
- WennSoft Service Management
- Microsoft Office SharePoint Server

Business Benefits:

- Dramatic improvements to cash flow management
- Flexible reporting is helping to build a more comprehensive picture of divisional performance
- Automated workflows are streamlining processes
- Improved customer service through more effective service management

For more information:

www.pa.com.au/microsoft

email: microsoftinfo@pa.com.au

call: 1800 126 499



Problem

One problem with growth is that it invariably brings greater complexity. An increased number of products, services, staff or processes means more to manage. For WPC, the result was that its simple start-up business systems were no longer suited to the organisation's more comprehensive information requirements.

Brad D'Cunha, Director of Corporate Strategic Management at WPC explains, "We had developed in-house applications for quoting, sales management, accounting and so on. There were around five different Microsoft Access-based systems that we used for various business processes. As we got bigger, the lack of integration between each system became a problem. Accounts were handled separately from quoting and from sales. There was a lot of information but no integration and that caused a lot of double and triple handling.

"One of our biggest issues was predicting and managing cash flow. The lead time for the products we supply can be anything up to 52 weeks and a single component can cost up to \$400,000. That makes cash flow management critical. It's all about timing but our separate systems couldn't pull together the information we needed together. This was probably the biggest factor that caused us to go out and look for a new, single business solution," he adds.



Solution

WPC management evaluated a number of systems, citing support and ongoing development as crucial to the selection process. Eventually the company chose Microsoft Dynamics GP, a powerful and flexible business management solution. D'Cunha notes, "Microsoft has thousands - rather than a handful - of developers. This made it very attractive to us."

Once the software had been decided upon, WPC turned its attention to finding the right implementation partner. "We spoke to a couple of companies that offered services around Microsoft Dynamics GP but we chose Professional Advantage because they put forward the best proposal from a business process point of view. They understood what we needed."

In addition to Microsoft Dynamics GP, Professional Advantage recommended that WPC deploy two other software solutions: Microsoft Office SharePoint Server to enhance information management and support workflow processes; and WennSoft Service Management to provide extra functionality for the company's service division.

WPC committed to Professional Advantage's proposal in July 2009 and just three months later, on 1 November, the new solution went live.

D'Cunha was determined to remain realistic about the change-over process. "We weren't kidding ourselves and knew that it would get some push back from those who were used to the old systems. Our main problems were cultural. For example, previously we'd had isolated applications and now information was being made visible across the organisation.

"The implementation had its moments. In the initial stages we had to stay focused on making sure that the system did what we needed so that we could operate as a business. But now, seven months down the track, everyone is used to it and we are beginning to see some benefit from all the integrated data," D'Cunha says.

Benefits

Cash flow, customer service, business processes and WPC's strategic decision making have all benefited from the introduction of its new business systems.

With Microsoft Dynamics GP being used to run finance, payroll, purchase orders, expediting, pricing and inventory, it's not surprising that every staff member at WPC has some exposure to the software. "It's used by everyone, from the storeman who receives goods to the managing director and the receptionist," D'Cunha explains.

"We run a divisional type of company," he adds, "and Microsoft Dynamics is allowing us to really look at the performance of each individual division by revenue, cost, net margin or net profit. It gives us a great deal of ability to analyse the business – almost under a microscope. Reporting is really unlimited. It's up to your own imagination as to the way you want to slice and dice information. You can analyse figures on any basis. It's a very powerful tool and so far, we've only scratched the surface. I think this area alone has delivered more than we ever thought possible. Everything from here on in is a bonus."

"The integration of purchasing with finance, for example, means that our cash flow management is one hundred times what it used to be. We are managing the gap between paying suppliers and being paid by end users," D'Cunha enthuses.

The combination of Microsoft Office SharePoint Server and Microsoft Dynamics GP has enabled WPC to incorporate business rules with its automated workflows. For example, the system adheres to predetermined rules regarding authorisation of purchase orders and spending limits.

The third part of the deployment – WennSoft Service Management – has also paid off for both customers and staff. "Service is becoming a bigger part of our business and the software allows us to manage jobs, service calls and equipment very well. When a customer rings up staff can now locate the job very quickly using either the serial number, purchase order number or even by the tag number. It's given our service department the ability to better manage orders and service to the customer," D'Cunha adds.

Asked what advice he would give to others considering a major software deployment, D'Cunha barely hesitates before nominating open communication with your consultant and thorough user acceptance testing. "You can never underestimate the importance of user acceptance testing. And when it comes to working with the consultant, you need to really sit down with them and get them to know your business. We were lucky. Our consultants spent a lot of time with us teasing out information. At times we thought it was a pain, but it turned out to be very beneficial and important. Just having them ask why you do something a certain way can make you examine it. It's a very healthy process for any organisation."

"Microsoft has thousands - rather than a handful - of developers. This made it very attractive to us."

About Professional Advantage

Professional Advantage was established in 1989 and today employs over 200 people in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, London and Fargo, USA. The company is the largest provider of leading brand global business management systems, such as financial management, ERP, CRM, retail, and business intelligence, to midsize organisations in Australia, supporting over 800 clients nationally. Its multi product offering is complemented by its development, systems integration, consulting, training, and support services.

The company's clients include medium to large public and private companies and government departments. For more information visit www.pa.com.au.