

Beacon Lighting

FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

Beacon Lighting has been illuminating Australian homes since 1974. The company is Australian owned and operated, with nearly 70 stores, both company owned and franchises, across regional and metropolitan areas. The company has aggressive growth targets and plans to open six new stores on an annual basis.

Beacon Lighting's journey started several years ago when it looked to replace and upgrade its ageing financials package. Following a tender process, Professional Advantage responded with a recommendation to adopt Microsoft Dynamics GP. Beacon Lighting believed this was the option that would best suit both its current and future needs.

From this foundation, Beacon Lighting's relationship with Professional Advantage has grown significantly in the intervening years. According to Beacon Lighting IT Manager, Mick Tan, Professional Advantage has become a trusted business partner. "We are in constant contact and the team there is always easy to deal with. I've been burnt in the past by companies promising a lot but not delivering, but Professional Advantage has always delivered on our expectations."

Snap Shot

Industry:

Retail/Franchise

Scenario:

With over 70 stores, both franchise & company owned, Beacon Lighting operate across regional & metropolitan areas. With an ageing financial package, over 6000 inventory items that made merchandise planning & replenishment challenging, and an intranet that did not provide the level of control required, Beacon Lighting looked at updating their systems to move forward.

Solution:

- Microsoft Dynamics GP
- Microsoft SharePoint
- Retail Analytics & Merchandise Planning (RAMP)

Benefits:

- Automatically generated purchase orders
- Improved stock control
- Improved workflows & information sharing
- Ability to integrate systems
- Double layered security protecting sensitive information

Implementation Partner:

Professional Advantage



After completing the implementation of Dynamics GP, Professional Advantage built a data warehouse for Beacon Lighting to provide the foundation for a customised retail planning and merchandising solution. This has been followed by a Microsoft SharePoint intranet portal project.

According to Dennis Dalla Costa, Senior Business Development Manager, Professional Advantage, "Our ability to successfully grow our engagement with Beacon Lighting is based on two key factors. First of all, we have been able to provide a broad range of skills to allow Beacon Lighting to expand upon its initial investment and get additional value from IT to improve its business. Secondly, we have a solid understanding of the specific business needs and challenges for franchise organisations, which has allowed us to successfully tailor solutions to better meet Beacon Lighting's requirements.

STOCK READY

With over 6000 inventory items, merchandise planning and replenishment is a significant challenge for Beacon Lighting.

"We wanted to be able to look at the model stock levels at stores and determine preferred levels of how much stock to carry, and from this automatically generate purchase orders when stock levels dropped," said Tan.

The replenishment system uses business intelligence tools and information drawn from Beacon Lighting's point of sale system to look at sales history, seasonal history and growth factors. Based on this information, recommendations are made on the replacement quantity of the product required by the store. Purchase orders are automatically generated by the system and sent to the warehouse system for processing.

"Since introducing the replenishment system, our stock control has dramatically increased. Previously stores would have to phone the warehouse to determine if stock was available. The replenishment system has greatly improved efficiency at stores and turnover is up. In fact, in the three years since the replenishment system was developed sales have increased by approx. 10 percent a year," said Tan.

SHARING INFORMATION AND IMPROVING WORKFLOWS

The most recent addition to Beacon Lighting's IT environment is a SharePoint intranet portal, used both at head office and at store level.

Prior to SharePoint, Beacon Lighting used TMS Intranet, an off-the-shelf package, for its intranet, but increasingly found that this did not provide the level of control that the organisation required. Using SharePoint security settings as well as customised passport ID, Tan has been able to set different privileges for company owned stores versus franchise stores, particularly for accessing the various reports hosted on the intranet.

"By using double layered security, we've eliminated the possibility of a company owned store accessing franchisee's reports or vice versa. This is very important for the confidentiality of our franchisees data," explained Tan.

In addition, as SharePoint and the reports it provides access to are web-based, they can be accessed through a browser from anywhere in the world. Beacon Lighting has found that this accessibility is particularly appreciated by its management staff and franchisees.

Through having integrated systems, Tan is able to provide meaningful reports, to a wider target audience. Reports are created using Reporting Services and accessed via the SharePoint portal. For example, a store manager may check the reports on stock at hand and use this data to initiate the process of an inter-store transfer.

At the head office level, Beacon Lighting has given the various departments the flexibility to create dedicated pages and post their own articles, pictures and document libraries. Tan has also used SharePoint to create online forms for various workflows. As an example, maintenance requests from a store can now be submitted via the intranet and a work request will be automatically emailed to the appropriate person, such as the Queensland maintenance manager if the store is in Brisbane. The IT department also receives a copy of all requests so that they can ensure the system is working effectively.



CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

The next step for Beacon Lighting is to extend the replenishment and merchandising system to its wholesale importing function. Professional Advantage has done the initial development work for this and Tan hopes that it will be activated in the next three to six months.

In addition, Tan is currently adding IT requests to the SharePoint portal. This will manage requests for new IT equipment, plus any fault issues that stores may have difficulties with.

"We're looking forward to continuing our relationship with Professional Advantage. We currently see a Professional Advantage consultant on a monthly basis for server administration, and also have a business intelligence programmer come in regularly. It is easier to work with one provider, when you know the people and know how they work. I see that our relationship with Professional Advantage will remain strong as we work together on more projects in the future," concluded Tan.

ABOUT PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE

Professional Advantage was established in 1989 and today employs around 250 people in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, 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 850 clients nationally. Its multi product offering is complemented by its development, systems integration, consulting, training, and support services. Professional Advantage is the winner of many business and vendor awards, including Microsoft Global Customer Care Excellence 2006, Epicor ANZ Reseller 2005, Epicor Global Vertical Market Solution 2005 for Senior Living Solution, Microsoft Inner Circle and President's Club Member 2006 and SunSystems Asia Pacific Partner for 2005.

The company's clients include medium to large public and private companies and government departments.

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