CASE STUDY

CLIENT:	Shamrock Craft
INDUSTRY:	Import, Wholesale and Distribution
LOCATION:	Australia
PRODUCT SUITE:	EXO Business
MYOB ENTERPRISE PARTNER:	BizPro

Crafts business frees up time to focus on value-adds.

Overview

Australian owned and operated for the past 30 years, Shamrock Craft has grown from a small craft shop to a nationwide operation supplying over 3,000 re-sellers from its modern distribution centre in Blackburn, Victoria. .

With over 8,000 products and a reputation for continuous and cost-effective supply and maintenance of stock, the company depends on a slick sales order process and total visibility over its warehouse.

Until recently however, it wasn't able to rely on either.

Choking growth

For about five years, Shamrock had been using two business management products simultaneously – one for inventory, another for accounting. And they didn't like either of them very much.

"I suppose they served a purpose when the business was much smaller," says Finance Manager Karryn Roberts.

"But trying to work with two systems that weren't integrated was literally choking our growth."

Looking for integration

Shamrock's priority was to find a system that integrated accounts and inventory. They also had two other key requirements: one, the system had to use EDI, an electronic means of transmitting data between organisations (in Shamrock's case, between them and their clients), and two, it needed to integrate with scan pick and pack technology.

"Having worked in software development myself," says Roberts, "I thought we'd probably struggle to find a single system with all that functionality 'straight out the box'. But I knew there were systems with the flexibility to bolt on the components we wanted."

Easy to understand and use

Shamrock looked seriously at about five products, including Pronto, SAP and Microsoft Dynamics (formerly Great Plains).

"What we had to bear in mind is that in our organisation, we've got a very diverse range of skills. Whichever system we ended up with, it would have to be easy to understand and use."

In the end, Shamrock chose EXO, because, says Roberts, "it gave us more flexibility with our business practices.

"With Dynamics, we would have ended up writing code between the inventory and accounts module, and we really didn't want to go down that track."

Pitching it just right

To integrate EXO, Shamrock approached Melbourne-based MYOB Enterprise Solutions Partner BizPro – a company that made a good impression from the outset, says Roberts.

MYOB ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS

"They realised straight away that we had several distinct groups of users in our business and tailored their presentation accordingly.

"Presentations from other companies were too high level," she adds, "but BizPro got it spot on. Almost immediately, they struck up a good rapport with us – and staff really took note".

The importance of acclimatisation

To ensure Shamrock were fully up to speed with EXO before switching live, BizPro set up a trial system and gave everybody access to the database. They also organised specific training for each different function within the business.

"They really are a very professional organisation," says Roberts of BizPro, adding, "they're not just empathetic – they have a natural understanding of what it is we need".

Pick and pack

Thanks to the integration of EDI and scan packing with EXO's SQL database, the biggest day-to-day change for Shamrock since installing EXO has been the ability to automate the entire sales order process.

Orders now come in automatically, before being sorted into date range in the warehouse according to the amount of stock that is available to pick and pack. As cartons are filled, an accurate record is kept and fed straight back to EXO.

"EXO doesn't just make our lives easier," says Roberts – "it makes the lives of our customers a whole lot easier too, especially when they're receiving stock into their warehouses.

"If a customer orders ten cartons of mixed stock, we can tell by weight and dimension which carton a specific item is located in. We can also tell if anything is missing – which is really useful when you sell a lot of small items like we do."

Clear benefits

It's hard to say exactly how much time this has saved, but it's considerable, says Roberts.

"Certainly some of the accounting tasks that used to take hours we can now complete in a matter of minutes. Purchasing too is just a case of pressing a button - as opposed to downloading two or three different sets of data and manually merging them on a look up table in Excel®."

This is all down to EXO's simple, customisable reporting.

Putting EXO through its paces

"We've gone through an interesting cycle with EXO," says Roberts.

"After the implementation in May 2010, we were all pretty excited to use it. Now we've got over that initial newness, we're really starting to push the system to see what it's capable of. We're asking more questions and getting more out of it."

Roberts says that staff at Shamrock love EXO.

"They love looking at something we still do manually and seeing if it can be done better in EXO. The system seems to instil that sense of possibility."

Freeing up time

When pressed to sum up EXO's biggest contribution, Roberts says there has obviously been improved visibility across the business.

But above all, she says, "it's given us time. By allowing us to provide our customers with more information, EXO has freed us up to focus on value-adds to the business.

"That's really something," concludes Roberts.

Client and Enterprise partner details

www.shamrockcraft.com.au

www.bizpro.com.au