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Interpipe Company Accountant, Sarah Woolerton, with Richard Anderson (Operations Manager) and Debbie Campen (Logistics Administrator).

Thorough implementation groundwork generates concrete benefits for Interpipe

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail,” goes the saying. Happily, concrete pipe manufacturer Interpipe Holdings took heed of this advice and is now benefiting from a text book Accredo software implementation.

The combination of a business savvy customer and a proficient software implementer has given the Waikato-based firm a range of business productivity improvements that reach beyond the boundaries of a standard accounting software implementation.

Interpipe’s company accountant, Sarah Woolerton, says the key to the on-time and on-budget implementation was extensive vendor research and a thoughtful discovery phase.

“We looked around for 10 months prior to settling on Accredo and we teamed up with an implementer that had accounting software experience – one that wasn’t too large to care, nor too small to cope with our demands.”

Interpipe appointed Bryce Gordon, of Taranaki accounting firm Staples Rodway, to step them through the software selection and implementation. He began by offering Interpipe a ‘no obligation’

scoping workshop to help prioritise its key objectives.

“The workshop gave us a chance to mull over our purchasing, inventory and manufacturing activities. These were areas we knew would deliver significant advantage if we could design the processes to best complement our business operations. The workshop was very specific to our needs and wasn’t slanted towards any particular vendor’s software.”

Woolerton says this requirements gathering exercise helped eliminate vendors that couldn’t provide the functionality Interpipe needed and fool-proofed her preference to go with Accredo.

“I had considered a wide range of systems – small, mid-tier and ERP solutions. Accredo came out on top because it offered the best balance between function and price. I was also influenced by the fact Accredo had a number of customers operating in the manufacturing and distribution sectors who had attested to their satisfaction with the product in case studies.”

Interpipe didn’t rush into its implementation.

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Thorough implementation groundwork generates concrete benefits for Interpipe...continued

Instead, it paused for breath and during the due diligence phase undertook further internal discussions about what effects the new software would have on the business.

"This intervening period was very valuable," says Woolerton. "It gave us time to analyse what we wanted to replicate from our existing system, and think about how we could deploy the new functionality Accredo offered to best manage our business growth."

Just before the implementation kicked off Gordon staged a second workshop that enabled Woolerton and other Interpipe staff to table their thinking. "The beauty of Accredo is that the software can be tailored to meet your demands, so Bryce was able to accommodate our ideas. Nothing

was set in stone. You need flexibility and room to change direction during an implementation."

Following a successful go-live, Woolerton says everyone within the company is extremely impressed with the software. "It shows you the benefit of good planning. We now have a system that provides us with much more than the expenditure and income functionality of our legacy accounting solution."

Thanks to Accredo, Interpipe now has sophisticated inventory management, better production planning processes and much tighter control over purchasing. Furthermore, Interpipe has been able to open up new areas of business operation to computer automation and control – and give users an appropriate level of access to the system.

"Our production supervisors, quality control and maintenance people are all using Accredo. Admission to the various functions can be set at the individual user level; everyone accesses only what they need to, to get their job done. It is a user-friendly system and we have redesigned some of the screens to make it easier for non-technical people to use."

This improved access has relieved pressure on the administration team, says Woolerton. "We now have a purchase order workflow with automated approval processes. This allows staff to go in and create their own purchase orders without having to wait on us to do it for them."

During the pre-implementation workshops Woolerton and Gordon deduced that Accredo's

Job Costing module could be used to better manage the company's production processes.

"We can now monitor our monthly production schedule with much more precision thanks to Accredo. We can see instantly how our production is running and compare actual quantities against our targeted amounts. The information is much more accurate because it all lives in the system – we no longer have to worry about error-prone spreadsheets. If there are any production anomalies they are much easier to spot and act upon."

The Job Costing functionality has improved production quality processes and ensures output for each customer is itemized and checked. Woolerton says it is then a simple task to move that across to invoicing.

"Using Accredo we have removed around six data entry steps compared to our old way of doing it. That is a real time-saver because new jobs come in every day. If you can streamline the way information is entered into the system, you reduce the risk of inputting errors and you free people up to work on higher value tasks."

Improved visibility of stock and the automated inventory adjustments are also making life easier, she says.

"We manufacture exclusively for Hynds and Humes and it is important we keep track of what stock belongs to which company. We used to make manual stock adjustments once a job was complete, but now when we invoice an adjustment is automatically made to reflect the change in stock at one or other of the two companies.

"This is a fantastic improvement. If incorrect stock information is entered it can cause problems further down the line. That risk has now been entirely eliminated."

Over the coming months Woolerton expects to fully delve into the reporting capabilities Accredo offers. "I can already see that forecasting, running second budgets and financial reporting will become a lot easier, because I won't have to generate information from multiple spreadsheets."

Woolerton says the company has taken a cautious approach to utilising all the features Accredo offers.

"We wanted to bed-in our key functions first and give ourselves time to think about what we want to do next. There is so much room for growth within Accredo and we have some exciting ideas on how we can address other areas of the business."

"The beauty of Accredo is that it can be tailored to meet your demands. It gives you the flexibility to change direction if you need to."

Sarah Woolerton,
Company Accountant,
Interpipe