"**Running a hosted version of Accredo enables our distributors to go online and process their own orders. It has removed a lot of duplication.**"
Carol and Rick Thorpe of Waimata Cheese Company,
with Accredo QSP, Jill Garrett, of Bluehouse Computing (right).

Automated order processing helps small New Zealand cheese maker foot it with dairy giants

When you compete against one of the biggest dairy companies in the world, running an agile and efficient business is vital to success, according to Rick Thorpe, owner of New Zealand family run cheese maker, the Waimata Cheese Company.

"We have been going for over 20 years and we compete with Fonterra and Goodman Fielder in the speciality cheese market. Ensuring we do things smarter and in a more streamlined manner is key to our ongoing survival."

Ever since the Gisborne-based company switched accounting software from QuickBooks to Accredo, Thorpe says, ensuring the business runs that way has become much easier.

"Accredo provides us with a complete business management software system that has streamlined and automated some our key business processes."

Local Accredo Qualified Support Person, Jill Garrett of Bluehouse Computing, suggested the company move to Accredo when it wanted to improve the traceability of products from farm to food store.

"Accredo was one of the few systems around at the time that gave us the visibility of the product from production, through the sales process to the end retailer. That tracking allows us to maintain high quality food standards," says Thorpe.

Waimata Cheese is a vertically integrated business – producing the milk, making the cheese, as well as packing and distributing it to leading supermarkets around the country.

"We have our own dairy farm and horticultural unit, and we also have a fresh milk delivery business."

Thorpe says one the advantages of Accredo is that it allows him to run all his different businesses on one platform. "It's been extremely useful having an accounting system that can manage everything we do. Our staff finds it easy to use and it's convenient to have all the information about our various companies in one place."

Getting customers to pay on time is a prerequisite of any well run business. When Waimata's major supermarket customers moved to electronic invoicing, Thorpe says his business had to adjust its protocols to ensure it got its invoices in on time for payment.

Automated order processing helps small
New Zealand cheese maker foot it with dairy giants…continued

"We ship bulk product to distributors in Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Nelson and they service the supermarkets in their local area. There was a lot of duplication going on. We would receive the orders, put them out to our distributors and they would then put them through their own system, but we would have to wait until we got their invoices delivered back to us before we could send ours off to our supermarket customers."

Waiting a week, if not longer, for the invoices to arrive from the distributors created a problem for Waimata at month end, Thorpe says.

"If we were slow we missed the month end cut off and that meant we got paid much later. We needed a more efficient process and thanks to the automation available with Accredo we have been able to introduce a much more timely system."

Waimata now has full business-to-business integration with both Foodstuffs and Progressive Enterprises, with purchase orders from all the supermarkets arriving directly into the Accredo system automatically each day.

Because it is running a hosted version of the Accredo system Waimata's distributors have direct access to the software. "They can go online and access their section of the system and process their own orders.

"The new system has removed all the duplication. The order is created by the store, electronically sent to us and when it's received, Accredo allocates stock and creates the order ready to go. The order is immediately available to the distributor who fulfils it and invoices it straight away."

Thorpe says it means the order-to-invoice cycle has been significantly improved, and stock management has gone to a whole new level. "With

each distributor set up as a location in the Accredo system, we can monitor stock levels a lot more precisely. We can refresh stock as it's needed, without having too much or too little available at any time."

With thousands of invoices arriving each week, Thorpe says the new process is saving him significant labour time.

The reporting Thorpe is able to extract from Accredo has also given him better visibility into the performance of his business. "Jill has created some custom reports for us, which slice and dice our sales and inventory data. That's what we like about Accredo. You can pretty much get whatever reports you want – at a very cost effective price."

With the invoicing going through on a near real-time basis Thorpe can pull off reports at any time that give him a good snapshot of how the business is tracking. "We know where we are exactly from week to week now. We don't have to wait until month end."

And he says he is keen to do more with the information Accredo provides. "Now that we have a regular flow of information, I want to create more in-depth and granular reporting across our product range and by store location. Once we have those reports established we will be able to get very good insights into how products are performing and it should give us some clear indications about where we can be more innovative."

Diversification is the key to survival, says Thorpe. "The dairy industry is extremely competitive at the moment – particularly when you are selling product through the supermarkets. We plan to diversify our product range, rather than compete head to head with the big boys. We will use the information from Accredo to guide our decision-making when it comes to exploring new products and markets."

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