



“The key thing we like about Accredo is that it is flexible. We have been able to mould it to work the way we want to.”

Alison Betts, Foodchain company accountant with Zeal Systems’ qualified Accredo support person, Rupert Edwards (left).

Food distribution company uses Accredo to automate key links in the chain

Ask any owner of a distribution company and they will tell you running a successful business requires constant vigilance. There are a lot of details which can make or break a business – satisfying demanding customers, keeping track of hundreds of products and meeting short deadlines, to name just a few. When you are a fresh food distribution company specialising in meat, poultry and fish for the hospitality trade, there are the added pressures of sourcing excellent quality produce, and keeping up with the latest food fashions.

It is one of the reasons why Foodchain, a New Zealand owned and operated food distribution business, is happy it moved to the Accredo platform, says company accountant, Alison Betts.

“There are many balls in play in our business and Accredo helps us to manage them all. It has automated many of our core day-to-day processes and we have been able to mould it to operate the way we want to work.”

The combination of Accredo’s customisable software platform and responsive support from Zeal Systems – who specialise in tailoring Accredo accounting software to meet the specific needs of

customers – has more than justified the company’s decision to move off its Attaché platform several years ago, Betts says.

“In 2014 we took the opportunity to look around at other systems. We attended an Accredo presentation by Zeal and found them to be approachable and professional. The software came in at a price point – which for the functionality it offered – provided excellent value.”

Betts says right from the outset Accredo offered advantages. “We were able to code a lot of rules into Accredo to help improve the way we operate, such as adding freight automatically to our invoices. Features like that save time and cut down on pricing errors.

“And, once we started working closely with Zeal, we discovered a whole range of things we could do to put Accredo’s rich functionality to work. Its particularly strong in the purchasing, inventory management and job costing areas – which are all key to ensuring we operate efficiently and profitably.”

Zeal has since completed a number of custom processes for Foodchain at its Auckland and Hamilton warehouses. These have helped it streamline customer ordering, increased the

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accuracy of receipting inward goods, as well as improving processing, picking and packing activities before items are shipped off to customers.

"Our telesales function is a good example of what smart automation can do," says Betts. "Zeal helped tailor it to our needs and now we have a very quick way to not only input a customer's new order into the Accredo system, but view their last few months' order history. This ensures we order the right brand of butter for them because we can see what they have had in the past without looking back at previous invoices. It also allows us to upsell. We can suggest things that they usually purchase, which they may have forgotten to order this month."



"Accredo provides lots of automations that save a surprising amount of time and effort – such as adding freight charges automatically to an invoice, and providing a quick view of a customer's order history so we can help them order more accurately."

Alison Betts,
Foodchain company accountant

Another timesaver for Foodchain is the comprehensive instructions it can include on its packing slips. "If a customer rings up and wants prawns, we need to know what type of prawns they require – we have a number of options and varieties! Or, if a customer wants their steak cut a certain way, our processing staff need to know what their specific wishes are. We can now provide them with that information thanks to the narrative on the packing slips. It cuts down errors, which of course is a time and cost saving benefit."

Foodchain and Zeal are also doing innovative work with barcoding and custom forms operating off a tablet. "This is improving our inwards goods receipting, our stock taking, and speeding up order processing."

When goods from suppliers arrive at the warehouse, Foodchain staff scan the barcode on the purchase order bringing up the expected order on screen. Armed with tablets, staff can then scan all the products that have come in and the system matches them to the purchase order. "If there any discrepancies between what was ordered and what arrived, they are immediately identified," says Betts. "It allows us to check and receipt the goods efficiently, and it improves the accuracy of our stock inventory."

It works equally well for order picking when assembling shipments to customers. "It's great for our outward goods activity. Operators scan the products they are attaching to the outgoing order and they can be assured they have selected the right type of tomato sauce for that customer – as a typical example."

Integrating barcode technology with Accredo even further, Zeal has designed a scales program to work with Accredo. It allows Foodchain to weigh unprocessed produce and then print a barcode that records all the key data for each of the individual items that are created from the initial produce – be it mince from a side of beef or fillets from a whole fish.

"The program allows us to weigh the mince we create, it then prints a barcode with all the relevant information, such as weight, best before data, packed date, etc, and then receipts it into Accredo as a manufacture."

Betts says the program is still being refined, but she can see it saving the company a lot of manual keying and providing more accurate and granular information directly into the Accredo system.

"It gives us a record of what we have managed to produce from the raw material. We then add on the labour costs and can be confident that we are pricing the item appropriately."

Zeal qualified Accredo support person, Rupert Edwards, says the program records not just quantity of material but the actual weight. "The flexibility of Accredo has allowed us to tailor the manufacturing functionality so it works better for Foodchain by recording weight. As a result, Foodchain can get better visibility into the efficiency of their food processing activities by knowing exactly how much raw product gets turned into finished items."

Edwards says, because all the information is stored on the bar code when that item is selected for an outgoing order the operator does not have to type the information in manually, it is simply scanned and all the information is sucked into Accredo.

"These are day-to-day processes that Accredo has helped either by improving the accuracy and depth of information we can capture, or by simply removing the manual labour which slows down our processing and order fulfilment," says Betts.

"We are very happy with Accredo's software and Zeal's expertise. It gives us a platform on which we can continue to meet growing customer demand into the future."