"Accredo has enabled us to consolidate our business processes and given us better visibility and management oversight."
Murray Clements, Clements Contractors, with Sandra Clements (centre) and Catherine Scott, Brunton NZ Ltd.

Accredo's integrated functionality does heavy lifting for growing contracting company

Acquiring a business is a proven way to grow and diversify a company quickly. But while sudden growth presents opportunities, it also carries risks.

When Clements Contractors purchased a quarry and yard three years ago it doubled in size. Business owner, Murray Clements, realised he needed to consolidate and control his newly expanded operations. To do so, he opted to implement Accredo – a business management software solution that enabled him to integrate all his key business processes. Now, one year on, he has real-time information to guide day-to-day decision making and full visibility of the business to plan future strategies.

The Northland-based operation has three parts to its business – transport, quarrying and construction. It operates four quarries; has over 30 trucks, diggers and other heavy machinery assets; and undertakes civil earthworks for sub-division construction, as well as private excavation work.

"We used to use MYOB for our accounts, and Workbench – a project construction management tool," says Clements, who runs the business together with his wife, Sandra. "They both worked well but when we took on the new operation, quarrying and transport became a much bigger part

of our business. We found we couldn't link the two systems successfully."

Without a connection between the two, information had to be entered manually and then exported. It was a time-consuming and error-prone process that didn't give Clements the real-time reporting he desired. Luckily, around that time Clements met Catherine Scott, who works for Accredo reseller Brunton (NZ) Ltd, providing Clements Contractors with Business and IT system support.

"Catherine recommended Accredo. We did some research and spoke to a few other companies that were using it happily. That gave us the confidence to try it."

Clements wanted a system that would work across all areas of his business. "We had grown a lot and we had a long-term plan to grow more. We had already done three software changes over the years, so we wanted a system that would meet our needs for a long time to come."

He says the move to Accredo was a big step up. "It's different to what we were used to, but the beauty of it is its flexibility. You can customise it to meet your unique processes. With other packages, you get what you pay for and that is it. With Accredo you can make changes."

Clements says having Brunton on hand to provide

Accredo's integrated functionality does heavy lifting for growing contracting company…continued

support has been extremely valuable. "I don't think we would be in such good shape without Catherine's help. She has tailored the system to make it easier for us to conduct our day-to-day activities. She has been brilliant."

An example of the time-saving functionality Clements Contractors now has is the integration between Accredo and the company's electronic load scanner. A laser scan of every empty truck is stored in the Accredo system. Once the trucks are loaded they are scanned again and Accredo calculates the difference to get an accurate cubic metre load.

"We charge by volume, but the loaders work by weight," says Clements. "The accuracy of the conversion is vital. We used to do it by recording information on bits of paper, which the office staff

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> Murray Clements, Owner, Clements Contractors

then used to do a manual conversion. Automating the process and letting Accredo do the maths has been a real revenue saver."

Clements says relying on manual processes is error-prone because it's easy for people to get distracted when they are busy. "The process is now a lot smoother and quicker. Everything is electronically measured and converted, and the information goes straight onto the relevant customer job."

The benefits of the integration flow through to invoicing. "Because the information is available immediately we can now invoice weekly, and that has improved our cashflow management," says Clements.

Customised job costing functionality is another key innovation, says Clements. "We have had Brunton customise Accredo's Job Costing module, so we now have everything related to a particular job all in one place in the system."

From one screen, Clements Contractors can track everything to do with a job – from raising purchase orders right through to invoicing, as well as pricing new tenders, adding labour costs to jobs, and issuing construction contract claims.

"The claim certificates we send in for our construction work have to be submitted in a specific

way to comply with the Constructions Contract Act. Accredo automates the assembling and sending of that information – it can all be actioned from the job costing screen."

Recording time and accurately mapping costs against relevant jobs is crucial in any contracting business. To meet this challenge Brunton created a time management module in Accredo.

"All the time the guys spend on the job, and the amount of time the trucks, diggers and other machinery are in use is recorded on timesheets, which are entered into Accredo," says Scott. "The module collates the information and logs the costs accurately against the right job."

As a result, visibility into profit and loss on company assets is much better, says Clements. "I can now get a very clear picture of both plant usage and labour hours. Armed with that information I can not only invoice more accurately but I can price future jobs with more precision."

When your business doubles in size that type of information is crucial to controlling growth, says Clements. "The timesheet information goes straight against the relevant jobs, and I can get real-time insights into how each job is progressing. Prior to Accredo, we wouldn't know until a month later how each job performed financially. Now, with daily recording I can monitor job performance and I don't have to spend time back-costing plant or labour."

Clements says the possibilities Accredo is unlocking for improved business planning and financial management are exciting.

"We are now in the place we always wanted to be, but prior to getting Accredo it was too hard to achieve."

With Accredo's reporting power, Clements has more granular control of the business. "I can see areas that need to be pushed or where we need to dial back. We regularly review the jobs we have done to see the margins and highlight which ones were most profitable. We discuss the reasons why a job went well and why it did not. All the intelligence is based on reporting we are getting from the system."

Better yet, Clements is sharing the KPIs with staff. "The administration team and quarry guys now have targets and goals to work to. When everyone knows what's expected of them, performance improves all round."

Says Clements: "We grew from 20 to 40 people when we purchased the quarry. That is a lot more people to manage and more processes to get right. We needed systems to manage growth and ensure proper controls were in place. Accredo has been a big part of that. It has enabled us to consolidate our business processes, giving us better visibility and management oversight."

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