"Accredo's robust accounting, job costing and automation features give us everything we need to run the business."
Theresa Mumford, Financial Controller, Altura (pictured with Accredo QSP, David Scott of Top Flight Computer Services).

Accredo keeps coffee business brewing with a blend of time and cost-saving innovations

New Zealand owned and operated coffee roasting company, Altura, was one of the first Kiwi businesses to anticipate and embrace our devotion to a good cup of java.

Its founder, Chris White, established the company in 1991 when a 'flat white' was hard to find. Since then his company has expanded and ridden the burgeoning coffee culture wave. Helping him manage that journey has been the time and cost saving automation features in the Accredo accounting solution – financial and work management software that has helped Altura successfully control its constant year-on-year growth.

From a one man start-up Altura now imports beans, undertakes contract roasting and supplies coffee and associated equipment to cafes all over New Zealand – as well as running its own café on Auckland's North Shore. Altura financial controller, Theresa Mumford, says the company continues to innovate and extend its range of services – thanks in part to its ability to automate a lot of time-consuming day-to-day business processes.

"We upgraded from Profax to Accredo just over 10 years ago, but we really moved ahead with the

system when we started working with Top Flight Computer Services. We have now implemented a number of business process automations and are using the system to its full potential."

Accredo Qualified Support Person, David Scott of Top Flight, has used the software to reduce manual intervention across a number of areas, including simplifying customer direct debit uploads, and allowing the company to intelligently manage sales and customer orders.

"We often have to fulfil over 100 orders a day," says Mumford. "We used to do that manually with a rolling phone call cycle and physical cards to record all the necessary information – it was the very definition of paper-based!

"It was a complicated process where we called all our customers on a weekly cycle and hand wrote orders manually on the cards. It was the lifeblood of the company as the calls would prompt customers who may have forgotten to order that week. Once the order was recorded on the card, it then needed to be manually input into Accredo."

After examining the process Top Flight created a custom form within Accredo that allows Altura to record the sales order details directly on screen.

Accredo keeps coffee business brewing with a blend of time and cost-saving innovations…continued

"We moved all the information that was on the cards into Accredo. We can select from a range of different call statuses, so no matter who calls the customer we know what communication has taken place. The order form is accessible from another tab on the same screen. It is easy to fill out and the workflow is simple to negotiate."

Once the order is placed, Accredo automatically adds the next call-back date onto the customer record and the order is sent downstairs to the warehouse, says Mumford.

"From there Accredo produces a packing slip which gets printed and scanned into a third party product that produces the postage and transport labels."

It's a seamless process that Mumford believes is now saving Altura the equivalent of one full time staff member every week. "Thanks to this innovation we have been able to re-task people to other jobs within the business.

She says the new system is also more error-proof than the old one. "We were recording a lot of information on those cards, including monitoring the grinding machine blades to ensure customers replaced them before they went blunt. But with so many things to remember and constant interruptions with customer call-backs, we would sometimes forget to record how many kilos of coffee a blade had done. Without a sharp grinder, the coffee doesn't taste good."

But now thanks to Accredo all this information is captured. It records how much coffee each customer has been sent and tallies the amount of coffee each grinder blade has processed, deducting it from the blades' lifespan. When it's time for a new blade to be sent out to a customer, an email is automatically sent to the Altura service area.

"The form can also alert our sales reps when an important customer hasn't ordered during the week, allowing us to proactively follow up and remind customers to get their order in."

As a growing business – Mumford estimates the company is increasing 20% year-on-year – it is that type of automation that improves customer service, whilst saving time and cost. "It allows us to get on and work on the business. We are constantly looking at ways we can innovate and improve what we do. And that is much easier when you don't have to do the repetitive manual processes."

Mumford says she tries to tackle one project a year, to provide incremental improvements to the way the business operates. "Recently we have concentrated on streamlining our financial and warehouse management processes. Having the headspace to work on the business is really important."

Altura is just about to green light one such project that will improve re-stocking and give her better insight into the exact cost of servicing a customer.

"We suffered from stock not being allocated correctly and were having stock variances as a result. The system would say we have parts in but in actual fact they had already been sent out to customers. Most of our parts come from Italy, so if we don't have them in stock there is usually a significant delay in re-landing them. We also needed a better way of tracking the amount of free servicing and parts we were providing."

Thanks to implementing Accredo's Job Costing module, Mumford says she can keep better track of the stock that is sent out on each service job, see how much the contract technicians charged for the work at a customer site, and get a better idea of the financial impact of each job.

"I can now see what these jobs are really costing the company. Working with David is great, because he understands the big picture. Every innovation we make has to make a positive impact on our bottom line. He doesn't get too caught up in the technology, rather he is thinking about how this particular improvement will serve the company as a whole."

Mumford says Top Flight has created a range of reports that provide detailed insight into how Altura's business is performing. "We have set up month-on-month and year-on-year profit and loss reports, and we can get granular information about what products our customers are purchasing. This allows us to undertake cross selling initiatives to increase sales when we see those opportunities arise."

Mumford says Accredo is a business software platform that will continue to grow with the business. "Over and above its robust accounting functions, it provides us with features tailored to the way we like to operate. Combine that with its stock control, job costing and all-round automation functions, it gives us everything we need to run not only the day-to-day activities, but gives us the information we need to plan our future direction."

> "Accredo has automated our key sales and customer ordering process. We can now capture all the necessary information in one form on screen and execute the order in one seamless workflow."
>
> Theresa Mumford,
> Financial Controller, Altura