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Adele Gordon Uniform Group (with Sue Brunton, Brunton NZ Ltd)

Clothing supplier moves smoothly onto new Accredo platform

In the face of increasing growth New Zealand clothing manufacturer Uniform Group realised its legacy financial accounting system could no longer adequately service its escalating workload. After carefully analysing its options it switched to Accredo, a business software solution that promised a smooth conversion, but even more importantly, increased financial processing power.

Transitioning to a new business software system is never a decision taken lightly by small to medium sized business owners. Swapping data from one system to another is fraught with difficulty and puts a company at risk of losing key information.

But Uniform Group director, Adele Gordon, was determined to find a system that offered more flexibility and ease of use, particularly since the software upgrade the company's existing supplier was offering had little in the way of compelling new functionality.

“We had stuck with the DOS-based system because the Windows version offered little improvement and was limited in its reporting functionality. Reporting was becoming critical for us, as we were securing an increasing amount of work from the Government. These contracts required us to provide timely information regarding the status of each delivery.”

Operating from its Morningside headquarters in Auckland since 1991, Uniform Group's core business is manufacturing and supplying uniforms to schools, government departments and sporting associations. The company has had a 15-year association with the New Zealand Olympic Committee and recently supplied all the formal wear for competitors, coaches and administration staff in the New Zealand Beijing Olympics team. The firm currently supplies uniforms to New Zealand Customs, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Department of Corrections.

Clean conversion retains key data

Gordon says the firm was wary of swapping to a new system. “We had accumulated a huge amount

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of data regarding uniform style codes and customer details. If we lost that information in a data transfer we would have to manually input it again, which would have been extremely time intensive."

Uniform Group was also weighing up whether it should opt for a system that had robust financial accounting functionality or choose one that had a strong manufacturing pedigree.

"It was hard to find a system that was excellent at both. We had to decide what was more important and we decided that financial management was critical. Accredo provided that, but it also had the ability to be customised, allowing us to create the type of manufacturing functionality that we desired."

Helping Uniform Group select the most appropriate new financial package was Auckland-based computer support company, Brunton NZ Ltd.

"With Accredo we can produce reports more readily and email them to suppliers directly from the system."

Adele Gordon Uniform Group

"We had done a lot of work with Brunton over the years, and they knew our business extremely well. We felt confident when they recommended Accredo that it would suit our needs," says Gordon.

Brunton's managing director, Sue Brunton, says Accredo has a robust conversion interface with Uniform Group's ageing Prophet software, which makes data transfer extremely easy to perform. "It's an uncomplicated process and there was no risk to Uniform Group losing any of its existing customer information. Once they were on the new system I knew its depth of functionality would offer huge benefits."

Improved data visibility

Improved ease of use, increased reporting power and reduced costs are just some of the benefits Gordon says the firm is reaping since the swap to Accredo.

"We do a lot of reporting out of inventory, such as issuing back order reports to maintain tight control over stock levels. Keeping an eye on stock related information, customer spend and sales analysis figures are key to maintaining a good hand on the business.

"We have set up minimum and maximum quantity measures for both materials and finished products which when reached will immediately appear on a pre-configured stock report. We can run this daily if we need to, ensuring supply keeps up with demand."

Gordon says finding information within the system is much easier with Accredo. "Each screen offers many more routes to drill down and retrieve data. Previously extracting information was much more time-consuming."

Accredo has also allowed the company to reduce costs and paper consumption, giving it the ability to email invoices, statements and purchase orders directly from the system. "Unlike our legacy system, Accredo doesn't charge us to send documents to customers electronically."

The new system has also automated some manual input processes, saving the company man power hours. "While our turnover has increased, we haven't had to increase staff numbers to cope. If you set up the reporting correctly you can save plenty of time."

Working with Brunton NZ, the company has created 'cut and make' sheets, successfully customising the system to better suit its manufacturing processes. The sheets are a record of all the necessary components needed to create a finished product.

"Essentially they are recipe sheets that live in Accredo which tell us exactly what components we will need and how much it will cost us to fulfil any particular order. We can send that off to our garment makers, accompanied by an image of the product, and they will instantly have everything they need to get the garments made."

Gordon says the support she receives from Brunton NZ continues to be of a high standard and the fact that Accredo keeps developing the product is heartening.

"We are now waiting on Accredo's new foreign currency release to hit the market. As a manufacturer that deals with a number of offshore suppliers we are keen to issue and account for invoices in the currency of our offshore partners and manage our exposure to the fluctuating New Zealand dollar. It will give us another valuable tool in maintaining tight control over the direction of the business."