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Chris Brittain Brittain Wynyard director (left) with Accredo QSP Peter Smith.

Double team a winning play for Brittain Wynyard

For the last 10 years iconic New Zealand company Brittain Wynyard has relied upon a marriage of two business software solutions to manage its growth. And, during that time, it has become one of the largest sporting goods' importers and distributors in the country.

Brittain Wynyard is a long established New Zealand brand. The business began life over 85 years ago, and today distributes sporting footwear and apparel, together with assorted sporting and camping equipment, to around 700 retailers around the country.

The system it uses to keep track of these customers, and more than 15,000 individual items of stock, is a tightly integrated business software solution consisting of Accredo financial management software and a best-of-breed inventory management solution from Total Communications, called JBiz.

Developed to make information about stock levels, product ranges and price lists available to a broader range of people, Brittain Wynyard Director, Chris Brittain, says the solution also helps his business simplify the ordering and forecasting process.

“The greatest challenge in our business is knowing what to buy and how much of it. I wanted a system that would let our customers and sales representatives have fingertip access to information they needed to make stock selections, fulfill orders and execute purchases.”

Brittain Wynyard imports goods from around the world and runs sales forces for each of its four divisions. The company does a lot of forward selling – looking ahead to the new season's ranges and placing indent orders for each of its customers. It also undertakes regular stock refills of existing lines for each of its retailers.

“We used to spend a great deal of time undertaking indent ordering, forecasting and doing range proposals for clients,” says Brittain. “I wanted to automate these labour intensive tasks, and provide a suitable online view for each of the participants in our business-to-business transactions.”

A meeting of minds between Brittain and Total Communications Director, Andrew Faris, saw the development of JBiz take shape. The e-business system promised to provide inventory ordering and logistics with dynamic forward stock positions,

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Double team a winning play for Brittain Wynyard ...continued

budgeting and purchasing visualisation – all presented through a browser and offering a 24 month rolling view of the business.

But before the system could be developed Brittain Wynyard first had to upgrade its financial management system.

Brittain Wynyard's IT Manager, Peter Smith, says the firm went looking for a sound back office platform which would facilitate the development of the JBiz software and provide seamless data integration – something that the firm's existing Prophet system could not supply.

"We did a thorough industry search and settled on Accredo, because along with its full function financial capabilities, it provided excellent scripting and data interchange capabilities."

Now an Accredo QSP himself, he says the Accredo system promised to easily manage data flow both ways between the two systems. This simplified the development of JBiz and the integration between the two systems.

"Accredo won't let incorrect data enter the financial system. Its error trapping is in-built which from a developer's perspective is ideal," says Smith. "It allowed us to develop the JBiz software and integrate it without affecting the day-to-day operations of the business."

Brittain says the results of the integrated solution speak for themselves. In JBiz, the company has a sophisticated inventory management and customer service system that manages proposals, ex-stock ordering, forecasting, budgeting and purchasing – all of which synchronises seamlessly with its back-end Accredo financial system.

"Our customer reps do all the order processing for indents and ex-stock items using JBiz. Each of the team updates their sales forecasts on a monthly basis which in turn, through the system, generates demand in the form of purchase orders."

By integrating its financial and forecasting information, Brittain Wynyard has gained deep visibility into company performance. "We rely on Accredo to look after the compliance side of the business and use it for real-time financial reporting, whereas JBiz maintains the stock database and gives us the capability to do pin-sharp order forecasting, based on our customers previous sales history."

The benefits don't end there. Brittain says thanks to the less manually intensive stock ordering processes he is able to run a business which is considerably larger with the same number of staff he had prior to the installation of the integrated solution.

"The information available and the speed of processing orders has greatly increased," says Brittain. "We have a rich amount of marketing detail and technical information that can be brought up on screen in a matter of seconds. This makes it easier for our representatives to find products and brings the range to life for someone who may not be familiar with it."

JBiz handles over 3000 different product styles, many of which have multiple colour, fit and size variations. Faris says JBiz's ability to accommodate this type of stock complexity is a major strength of the system and the technology has been successfully patented in the US, Canada and Australia.

JBiz provides Brittain Wynyard's reps with a customer's full sales history on screen – information they use to make informed decisions about which future new lines to order for their retailers. The retailers also have a view of what stock is available to them, via the JBiz client extranet.

This results in more streamlined and accurate inventory management. Margins are maintained and costs removed from the business as less unsold stock has to be 'specialised off'.

JBiz also has comprehensive mobile sales functionality. This replicates what the sales reps see on their laptops and allows them to take orders 'on the move'. Once an order is taken, the mobile sales system synchronises with the head office server when connected to the internet.

Faris says, "This means Brittain Wynyard's reps can fully update the JBiz system with all transactions within the business for use when out of range of an internet connection."

Says Brittain: "JBiz and Accredo work extremely well in conjunction with each other. They provide our business with a common, easy-to-use platform with the functionality we need to keep all participants in our business fully informed of our day-to-day progress."