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Kyne Larkin, Director, Whites

Moving parts: Integration project gives growing motorcycle wholesaler rich online offering

These days when a business ponders how to extend its competitive advantage, e-commerce is often one of the first functions to come under scrutiny. Whites Powersports (Whites), New Zealand’s leading distributor of motorcycle parts and accessories, was no different. It identified room for improvement and after 18 months of hard work is about to reap the benefits of a re-platformed web presence for its New Zealand and Australian outlets.

According to Whites Director, Kyne Larkin, creating a bespoke, full function e-commerce shop window wasn’t a simple undertaking, but it was made easier thanks to White’s integration-friendly Accredo accounting solution. “Ensuring the interface between Accredo and our e-commerce software, Acumen, worked seamlessly involved a lot of work. The fact that we were in growth mode and at the 11th hour decided to acquire a parts business in Australia added further complexity.”

But thanks to its determination to offer a better web experience to its dealers and the ability of its technically savvy Accredo QSP, Glen Wallace (Solve Consultants Ltd), the project was steered to a successful conclusion.

A desire to try and do things better has seen

White’s – a business established in 1952 – become the largest motorbike parts and accessories supplier in New Zealand. Larkin says Accredo has been an essential ingredient helping it achieve consistent growth.

“It has helped keep costs down and manage growth by allowing us to easily integrate the businesses we have acquired over recent years into our organisation. We currently run three different New Zealand companies, as well as our new Australian operation, and they are all managed at various company and branch levels within the Accredo Saturn software.”

An Accredo customer since 2002, White’s had been looking for a suitable e-commerce provider to help it move off the industry standard Sprint3 online portal it shared with several of its competitors.

“That portal didn’t give us any brand differentiation and we couldn’t get the changes we wanted made, so it forced us to go it alone. Glen and Accredo suggested we look at Acumen.”

Acumen is a New Zealand based company that specialises in functionally rich online website software solutions that help companies connect to customers and drive growth.

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"We wanted to offer our dealers more online services; allow them to check their account balance, see their specific stockists discounts and a range of other value adds – none of which we could do using Sprint3's functions."

Larkin says after a few false starts with other web developers, Acumen provided a way forward. "We began working with them around 18 months ago and we now have our New Zealand and Australian dealer websites up and running. We have done the building phase and now are moving into marketing the sites to show dealers the value in transacting with us online."

With over 35,000 skus, Larkin says a large majority of the hard work was in cleaning up the products data, cataloguing products correctly and defining category trees.

Wallace's mission was to ensure a seamless integration between the information stored in Accredo and the customer facing functionality offered on the website. "It was a big undertaking. We had to add a number of extra tables within the Accredo files to enable the integration.

I worked closely with Acumen to ensure the integration was designed in a way that allowed the two sites to be maintained in an appropriate way. Defining a process to implement changes so they were reflected correctly at the Accredo and Acumen ends was vital."

Wallace says the website is maintained almost in virtual real time. All the data coming through from Whites Accredo tables goes through a polling process – from every five minutes, up to once a day. "All those different bits of data are on their own schedules. So information is permanently being updated all day, every day."

Thanks to the new online presence White's dealers can not only order through the websites, but check on order fulfilment, view and print invoices, check account balances and access Whites fitment database – a graphic tool that dealers can query to find out which products fit which model of motorcycle.

"The fitment tool has over 19,000 models of motorcycle and over one million parts allocated to those. It has a lot of our IP tied up in it and represents over a decade's worth of development. It was one of the driving reasons for re-platforming our web presence, as we wanted dealers to have fingertip access to that information."

Using the tool, dealers can find a list of every part and accessory for a particular make and model of motorcycle. The website will also give them an up to the hour stock position, the pricing that relates specifically to them as well as images and technical

specs of the part.

A key part of the functionality available to dealers from the website is provided by Accredo's Special Pricing module. "Special pricing has been invaluable," says Larkin. "It allows us to offer competitive advantage to each dealer commensurate to their spend with us. They can now log in and get their exact stockist pricing. In the past, some dealers were unsure about how much a part cost because they weren't sure whether a special price applied to them and they couldn't easily access the information to find out."

Wallace says Whites is a very sophisticated user of Accredo. "It is an organisation that relies heavily on the software's ability to be customised. There is no software "off the shelf" that would accommodate the type of business processes Whites has created."

Being able to tailor the software to suit exactly how the company wants to operate is a huge competitive advantage for White's. Says Larkin: "Our ordering and shipping process is a good example. We have automated it down to a few clicks. We can receive an order from Australia, review it, check the pricing, and print a copy out in the warehouse complete with barcoding for picking, packing and shipping. If you can automate a process, we have done it using Accredo."

Accredo covers all the bases for Whites. "We use it for our accounting obviously, but also for our customer management and stock inventory," says Larkin. "It has foreign currency built into its DNA, which is a big plus for us as we source products from all over the world."

Larkin says the software combined with Wallace's technical and accounting knowledge has kept the company on a good growth path. "It's hard to overlook the value Glen provides our company. He became our Accredo Qualified Support Person around eight years ago and our turnover has at least doubled since then and he has been integral to that. He is very good at the accountancy side of things, but most importantly, he can talk to us in layman's terms and match the software to our commercial requirements. If we want a new report or workflow, Glen makes it happen on the Accredo platform."

Larkin says the Accredo system and Glen ensured that bringing the Australian acquisition on-board went as smoothly as possible. "Accredo has the ability to scale when you are in growth mode. All the information from the Australian business resides on the Accredo system and is set as an Australian company. Apart from the extra user licences we don't pay any more to have another company on the books. It is another example of why we are 110 percent behind Accredo."

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