



“The new iPhone app has cut down on paperwork and data entry mistakes. All the information about purchased goods flows automatically into Accredo.”
Chris Hughes, Managing Director, Progressive Engineering (left)
with Dean Kelsall of Online Computer Consultants.

Mobile app sparks back office efficiency for Southland electrical engineering firm

A Southland-owned milking, electrical and irrigation company is making life easier for its fleet of on-the-road technicians, giving them access to Accredo’s purchase order functionality through their smartphones and tablets.

Progressive Engineering specialises in new dairy farm conversions. The company maintains and repairs all the plant associated with milking cows, undertakes electrical repairs, and sets up irrigation systems. The growing business also carries out a range of other commercial and domestic electrical and refrigeration contracting work.

Progressive Engineering Managing Director, Chris Hughes, has worked hard to diversify into new areas, such as irrigation and refrigeration, and says Accredo has supported the company every step of the way.

“We were using Accredo, and Profax prior to that, before I came on board around 10 years ago. Everyone is happy using it. It is very adaptable and as our business has grown into new areas we have been able to add functionality and extract the information we need to carefully manage and guide our progress.”

Progressive upgraded to Accredo’s multi-location software, Accredo Saturn, a few years ago – a move that Hughes says has given him improved visibility of the business.

“We had grown from a company that did repairs and maintenance and the occasional dairy shed conversion to a company with dedicated dairy, engineering, electrical and refrigeration divisions. We had also set up a new office covering the Central Otago region. When I took over as Managing Director I wanted to get a more granular view of the business. It’s all very well having a bucket of money at the end of the year, but you need to know where it comes from. Upgrading to Saturn gave us that information.”

Thanks to Accredo Saturn’s rich profit and loss functionality, Hughes can accurately monitor revenues, costs and expenses, allowing him to see exactly how each of his company’s divisions is tracking.

“I am a numbers guy. I wanted to make each division accountable and answerable to ensure they are turning a profit and not sucking funds by underperforming. We have now built up a year-on-year history, which allows us to compare performance. If, for some reason, we want to divest

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any division in the future we have a good, granular record of our financial performance.”

Hughes praises his Accredo support team – Dean Kelsall and Stuart Fraser of Online Computer Consultants – for getting the business to this point. “Dean and Stu are very good on Accredo and when we want to do different things they build modifications to the system, so we can operate in a way that best suits our business model.”

The most recent innovation Online has implemented for Progressive is saving time and allowing the business to run a tighter ship when it comes to stock control and invoicing.



“Upgrading to Accredo Saturn has given us improved visibility of the business. I know exactly how each division is performing.”

Chris Hughes, Managing Director,
Progressive Engineering

Online has created an iPhone app that allows Progressive’s technicians and electricians to generate purchase orders on the move. The app talks directly to Accredo and ensures that supplier goods for each job are always included on the final invoice.

Using the new app Progressive’s technicians take their job sheets to their local electrical wholesaler, get the items they need for the job based on the job sheet, pull out their phone, scan the job number code, type in some detail about the goods, and then press ‘send’.

“The request gets sent directly to Accredo, and Accredo checks the code is valid and the job is open. It then creates a purchase order in the system and fires the purchase order number back to the person at the supplier. All the goods ordered are automatically pre-populated. We don’t have to wait around for the packing slip or invoice from the supplier to enter the items into the system,” Hughes says.

When you have around 25+ service vehicles on the road purchasing goods for jobs, the advantages of the mobile app are significant, says Hughes.

“If the guys were slow in bringing the books back into the office, worst case scenario, jobs would be closed before all the purchase orders were included on the invoice.

“If you have sent out the invoice without all the paperwork on it you can’t bill the customer for the items you failed to include.”

After using it for only a month the benefits are already flowing, Hughes reports. The office administrators don’t have so much manual input to do and Progressive has reduced data entry errors as a result. “With so many people on the road a lot of paperwork is created. Now a lot of it is instantly in the Accredo system. It lets our staff concentrate on other higher value tasks.”

The app has also helped improve general stock control, Hughes says. In the past keeping track of what stock each tradie had in their vans was problematic. All general electrical stock purchases now have their own purchase order number and an email is automatically sent to the office alerting the administrators as to who has purchased what.

“The purchase order is logged into the system, but we also know who bought the stock. It gives us a visible paper trail which we can use if we need to track the stock. Everything that gets purchased for electrical stock needs to be cleared by the end of the month. The office staff can proactively chase people if it’s unaccounted for.”

Hughes says this will stop a lot of head scratching at the year-end stock take. “We know who has ordered what, what jobs the items have been used on and we can stop any unnecessary over-ordering.”

Hughes will look to Online and Accredo to provide more mobile functionality in the future. “Timesheets are another labour intensive area. When you get bombarded with 25 timesheets a day, the workload in the office can be intense. If the guys could add their time into their phone as they go that would save a lot of back office processing.”

Hughes accesses Accredo off-site on his laptop whenever he needs to, using Microsoft’s Remote Desktop technology. And, moving with the times, he is putting Accredo in the cloud. “We needed a new server so decided to use Online’s Cloud Services capability to house it off-site. They are the computer experts and will handle all the server management and software upgrades on our behalf, leaving us to get on with what we do best – keeping dairy farms running smoothly.”