



“As well as automating day-to-day activities, Accredo gives us more transparency. It’s good for teamwork and things get done more efficiently.”
Steve Malcolm, Director, Echodale Marketing (second from right),
with Sue Brunton (left) and the Echodale team.

Switch to Accredo bears fruit for growing South Island wholesaler

When Steve Malcolm went looking for new software to run his wholesale pip fruit distribution business he struggled to find a system capable of handling his key business processes – that is until a colleague suggested Accredo accounting software.

“I took a few providers around and showed them how we operate, and they just scratched their heads and said they wouldn’t know where to start,” says Malcolm, director of Echodale Marketing Ltd, a fifth-generation New Zealand-owned family business that has been operating in the Nelson region for over 80 years.

Echodale is a leading fruit distributor that specialises in selling apples and pears. It receives, stores, packs and distributes for growers around the Nelson region, supplying fruit to multiple supermarket chains across the country. It also exports fruit offshore to countries around the Pacific Rim.

The goal was to install a system for Echodale that could automate the tracking, traceability and grower payment processes that the company, up to that point, had been doing by hand.

“We already had established a robust system for tracking each grower’s fruit from arrival to the

point of sale and then calculating the pay out to the growers, but it was all manually done – written in books, on cards and using Excel. I wanted to automate these processes and document more accurate financial information to make payments to the growers. The aim was to reduce the chance of human error and to free up more administrative time to focus on growth and customer service activities.”

Echodale looked at the systems some exporters were using, but they weren’t appropriate to what it was trying to achieve. “Once the produce left New Zealand there was no easy method of linking it back to the growers, which is what we wanted to achieve,” says Malcolm.

To drive customer service forward and meet the growing customer demand for complete produce traceability, Echodale management wanted to know at the end of each day or week, exactly what had been packed and sold for each particular grower.

“There are a lot of different costs that need to be recorded during the packing, storing and transport of the produce. We wanted to automate the workflows involved and drive all that information into one system, where we could report on it and see how we were performing. That would allow us to provide timely information back to growers and get

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insights into where we could improve our practices.”

After being recommended Accredo, Malcolm read about another Accredo customer, Barnes Oysters, that processes much of the Bluff oyster quota each season, packing and shipping the oysters to wholesalers and retailers around the country.

“Their business model was like ours and they were using Accredo to achieve some of the gains we wanted, such as the ability to automate the invoicing process and handle multiple delivery addresses.”

With his business expanding, Malcolm decided he needed richer functionality and more comprehensive reporting than his existing MYOB system could provide.



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Echodale Marketing

Enter Accredo Qualified Support Person (QSP), Sue Brunton, owner of accounting solution support provider, Brunton NZ. She and her team went on site and saw exactly how Echodale operated, copied all the procedures and set about customising Accredo’s accounting software to systemise the company’s daily activities.

“It is important to have a robust paper system to begin with,” says Sue Brunton. “We were lucky in that Echodale is a very mature operator, its systems and processes were tried and tested, and that made our job much easier.”

Brunton has not only replicated Echodale’s paper-based processes but also improved its batching and traceability activities.

Every bin of fruit that arrives at Echodale is entered into the Accredo system. There is a traceable number linking the grower to the packed produce in the cool store.

“As the daily orders come in from various supermarket distribution centres, the packed fruit is picked out of the cooler and re-entered into the Accredo system,” says Brunton. “It sits there until

payment is received and that is recorded against the grower. There is a traceable number linking the grower to every carton or crate that goes out the door.”

The data automation has saved the time equivalent of about one full-time person. Echodale’s processing is also more accurate and faster. The system picks up on most human errors and users can query the system and find out exactly, for example, what the return has been on packing pears for the last two months.

With more accurate and up-to-date information in the system, other activities across the business have also improved. “We now have one source of truth. The information is captured in the system and checks are in place,” says Malcolm.

Echodale expects further gains when it introduces barcoding, allowing incoming and outgoing goods’ information to be scanned directly into Accredo. “That will save even more administration time and iron out any remaining kinks in the workflow.”

Accredo has simplified Echodale’s inward and outward receipts. “A good example is the bins we provide growers. We now use Accredo’s inventory module to record where the bins are, and we can track their movement in and out of the cool store much more effectively, which has saved us time and reduced some of our costs.”

One of the unexpected benefits of the Accredo accounting software is that it has made Echodale staff work better as a team. The system makes all the many different administrative tasks that must be done each day more easily seen. “As well as automating day-to-day activities, exceptions and notifications can be seen in the system by all the relevant users. It gives us more transparency, is good for teamwork and things get done more efficiently.”

Working with a QSP that knows Accredo inside and out has reaped rewards. “I like the fact that Accredo is a Kiwi product and we enjoy working with Sue and the Brunton team for the same reason. They offer great service and support. Everything they do for us is executed in a timely fashion.”

Malcolm says it was the flexibility of Accredo, together with the amount of information and processes you can adapt it to undertake, that won them over.

“But having a good support partner is key. Brunton has the Accredo knowledge but they also listen, which means the customisations we have made in Accredo operate exactly how we want them to.”