CASE STUDY

CLIENT:	Crow
INDUSTRY:	Manufacturing
LOCATION:	Australia
PRODUCT SUITE:	EXO Business
MYOB ENTERPRISE PARTNER:	Oxygen Express

Increased visibility helps Crow complete transactions and get orders out the door more quickly.

Overview

Crow is an Australian-owned manufacturer of electronic detection systems, control and communication products and digital video transmission and recording solutions.

Established in 1988, the business now has 15 people working across three sites in Australia and exports to over 40 countries. Maintaining a real-time view of stock is critical to the success of the business.

Crow's old set up

Crow had been running Business Partner for 10 years. And for much of that time, according to Crow's Financial Controller Pamela Harel, it was a highly reliable system.

"In terms of meeting our requirements as a general ledger and basic accounting tool, Business Partner did the job just fine," says Harel. Where it fell down however, was in the area of stock control.

Crow assemble many of their products on site so having real time visibility of the location and availability of components is absolutely essential to the flow of business.

"It isn't just physical tracking either," Harel adds. "We need to be able to assemble products virtually in the system by associating components to a particular job. That just wasn't possible with Business Partner."

Another limitation of Crow's legacy accounting system was its inability to work in multiple currencies.

"Importing from overseas and distributing to over 40 countries, we wanted to maintain creditors and debtors in their own currencies," says Harel. "But our old system forced everything into Australian dollars, which meant we had to manually adjust currencies for every transaction."

Choosing a replacement

Crow assessed several solutions over the course of six months but was unable to find anything within budget.

"Most systems came with a $50,000-$60,000 price tag, which we weren't prepared to pay," says Harel.

Then Crow's IT support company suggested looking at MYOB EXO Business (formerly known as MYOB Exonet). EXO Business was not only compatible with Solution 8 (which was being used by Crow's accountants), but it was recognised by the Australian Tax Office.

"Best of all," adds Harel, "it was in budget."

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CASE STUDY

After a couple of false starts...

Crow initially purchased EXO Business from ATTSOFT. A couple of months later however, ATTSOFT ceased to support EXO Business and Crow were forced to look elsewhere. After another brief and unsatisfactory relationship with a replacement support company, Harel was finally referred to EXO Business specialists Oxygen Express.

From that point onwards, she says, "everything went smoothly".

"Oxygen Express looked really hard at our business and our requirements to gain a real understanding of what it was we wanted to get out of EXO Business. They also 'mocked up' several sample scenarios so that we could appreciate the benefits of certain management reports before using them live."

Once Crow were happy with the basic functionality they were getting from these reports, they conducted a soft launch in just one of their branches to ensure the switch was as seamless as it could be. With no major hitches, the remaining branches followed suit.

Harel stresses you have to be patient when implementing a new system like this.

"You can plan as much as you want but there'll always be teething problems," she says. "The trick is to be patient."

"That said, there are things you can do to minimise risk," she adds. "Do it at a quiet time of year. And obviously choose a provider or support company that knows its stuff inside out and appreciates what it is you want to get out of the system. We learned this the hard way."

Learning to use the system

According to Harel, getting to grips with EXO Business was straightforward.

"I learned to use the bulk of the system myself," she says, "only referring to Oxygen Express, or our previous support company, for really technical matters".

Such was Harel's own confidence in operating EXO Business that she also trained the rest of the organisation herself. In all, she says, it probably only took a week for everybody to get up to speed.

Seeing it all come together

Harel says the most noticeable difference with EXO Business, compared to Crow's previous system, is that everything – from general ledger to stock control – comes together as one.

"You can't run a business today without accounting software. It's a necessary and assumed part of the process. For that reason though, you don't want software that only goes so far. You want all elements of the business covered by the one system."

In practical terms, Crow can now not only record hundreds of items of stock separately, but have each associated by job in the system. This means they know exactly when a job is ready to progress (Crow assembles many of its products on site) or whether it's being held up by a specific item of stock.

"Having the visibility over which transactions are ready to go really forces you to complete the ones that aren't," says Harel, "and that gives you more control over the funds".

"Having more control over the funds means it's easier to budget or forecast accurately."

EXO Business also allows Crow to maintain their creditors and debtors in their own currencies – US companies in US dollars, New Zealand companies in New Zealand dollars and so forth.

Overall impressions

According to Harel, EXO Business has above all given Crow much better management visibility.

"We get audited regularly, she says, and I can be asked to produce data from any period over the last 24 months.

"With our old system, I'd have to trawl through lists of figures. But with EXO Business, I can very quickly pull up snapshots of data on sales or stock or creditors. It saves an awful lot of time."

Client and Enterprise partner details

www.crowaust.com.au

www.oxygenexpress.com.au