

CASE STUDY

CLIENT:	Cotswold Furniture
INDUSTRY:	Import, Distribution
LOCATION:	Australia
PRODUCT SUITE:	EXO Business
MYOB ENTERPRISE PARTNER:	Kilimanjaro Consulting

MYOB software allows NSW furniture importer to shed light on its sales order process and build for the future.

Overview

Cotswold Furniture are sole importers, collectors and distributors of exclusive international furniture brands.

With a reputation for quality and style, the company has grown significantly in the last 30 years. They now have four outlets of their own and a network of around 20 dealers nationwide.

But with an expanding customer base that consists of retail outlets, clubs, restaurants, resorts, hotels and public gardens, the success of the business depends on total visibility over the sales order process.

Outgrowing Premier

For several years, Cotswold Furniture were using MYOB Premier as an accounting package. In the beginning, it was ideal. But as the Cotswold brand grew, the system struggled to cope with demand.

"With a head office in Mittagong and a store in Artarmon, we needed to be able to share information across the two locations," says Joanna Kenneally, Cotswold's General Manager, "and we couldn't do that properly with Premier".

There were other issues too.

"Our inward goods costing processes were really too complicated for Premier," she says, "and we were dealing with multiple imports from Europe and the US. All of a sudden, multi-currency and real time stock control were features we could no longer do without."

So Cotswold started looking for a replacement system.

The right criteria

For the best part of a year, Cotswold investigated various different packages, including Sage's AccPac. In the end, they decided to go with MYOB's EXO Business.

Kenneally admits that price played a big factor in the decision, adding that it was "cheaper than a number of competing systems, including Sage".

There were other factors too, such as EXO's Sales Order module – which seemed to offer much more control over the sales order process.

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Turning things round

Initially the implementation was tasked to a local company in Sydney, but they did such a poor job that Cotswold had to turn to their business consultants Kilimanjaro Consulting (formerly Baskin Clarke) for help.

“Despite having no prior experience of the system, Kilimanjaro’s knowledge of our business meant they knew exactly what we were trying to achieve,” says Kenneally.

“By coupling that understanding with some formal training in EXO, they were able to turn things around for us just in time.

“Ronnie, in particular, was extremely helpful from the beginning,” she adds.

“He was always there, and always available to bounce new ideas off, which helped us gear the system even more closely to our needs.”

Tracking orders from cradle to grave

At the time of implementation, one of Cotswold’s chief requirements was to overhaul the manufacturing customising process.

Kenneally explains.

“We import ready made furniture, but paint it ourselves. With Premier, we’d put in an order for a customer but be in the dark from that point onwards.

“What we needed,” she continues, “was something that could tell us where in the process a piece of furniture was”.

As a logical extension of that, Cotswold also wanted their customers to be able to track orders online.

Working blind

Several years on, Cotswold doesn’t just have two branches. They’ve now got a showroom in Brisbane and a fourth premises opening up in Melbourne.

According to Kenneally that just wouldn’t have been possible with Premier.

“Before EXO, no-one could track customer orders internally. We could see stock availability, but couldn’t tell whether an order had been confirmed, picked, painted or was awaiting dispatch.

“Clients would phone our store wanting to know the status of their order. The store would have to call the warehouse, at which point we’d often physically have to go and locate the item, before feeding the information back to the customer.

“Multiply that hundreds of times a day and it’s not hard to imagine how chaotic things were,” says Kenneally, “not to mention how difficult it was for us to give customers precise delivery dates”.

Empowering customers

Since installing EXO, that entire back-and-forth enquiry process has been eliminated from Cotswold’s workload. By assigning every stage of the sales order process to a single job, it’s possible for Kenneally or other members of staff to track any order right up until the point it’s delivered to the customer.

Better still, thanks to the introduction of an online system (written by Kilimanjaro to integrate seamlessly with EXO) customers and third party dealers around Australia can check themselves whether an item is in stock before placing an order, then track that order all the way to their door.

Spreading responsibility

Remote access isn’t just for the benefit of customers and stockists either.

“In the past, our accountant used to have to travel to Mittagong whenever there was an issue. Now, she just logs on remotely.”

One of EXO’s most prominent features is its multi-user accessibility. Instead of the responsibility for entering data falling to just one person, everyone in the organisation – from the sales guys to management – can be allowed some degree of input. This reduces bottlenecks and keeps the flow of data much more up to date.

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Focusing on any aspect of the business

For management, it's that ability to pull out snapshot data on any aspect of the business that makes EXO such a useful tool day-to-day.

"We can shift our focus from margins to stock to inward goods schedules at the click of a button. And if we need visibility on anything else, all we have to do is ask Kilimanjaro to create a new report."

The only downside to that, according to Kenneally, is that you really have to know what you want.

"We've ended up with the remnants of reports that seemed like a good idea at the time, but which we now rarely use."

Other improvements

Other improvements include the ability to handle multiple currencies – which, for a company like Cotswold that imports from Europe and the US, is essential.

"All we have to do is make sure the exchange rate is in the purchase order," says Kenneally, "and everything flows just as if we were using Australian dollars".

Debtor aged balances are managed far better too.

The flexibility to grow

"MYOB EXO has allowed us to provide real time information to everyone in the organisation and, as such, it's provided us with a platform from which to grow," says Kenneally in conclusion.

Without a doubt, she says, EXO's biggest strength is the ability to customise it the way you want it.

"Being able to turn to Kilimanjaro and ask them to drum up a report really is fantastic. As long as you're clear about what it is you want to see in EXO, the flexibility is there for you to do almost anything."

Client and Enterprise partner details

www.cotswoldfurniture.com.au

www.kilimanjaro-consulting.com.au



AUSTRALIA

Call 1300 555 110
Email exo@myob.com.au
Web www.myob.com.au/enterprise

NEW ZEALAND

Call 0800 696 239
Email exo@myob.co.nz
Web www.myob.co.nz/enterprise