



ERP system improves furniture chain's visibility

Overview

Established in Victoria in 1985, Early Settler is now one of Australia's most recognised furniture brands, with more than 30 stores here and in New Zealand. In 2005, the Early Settler and Recollections brands merged to become ESR Group Holdings Pty Ltd – a company that could offer an even greater range of styles from a wide variety of quality new and recycled timbers.

But with many more transactions and increasing volumes of data, the need to find a robust ERP system that could handle the growth of the business became paramount.

Problem

A good system for smaller businesses

Up until recently, ESR had been using MYOB Premier – and found it to be a good system. "Staff loved it," says Chief Financial Officer Joanne Flood. "If they made a mistake or wanted to change something, they could just click on it there and then, without having to make a journal entry.

"It was easy to use and exporting data to Excel for further analysis was straightforward. But in the end, we just outgrew it."

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Solution

Weighing up the options

Flood says they assessed several replacement systems against the same criteria:

- 1 Price: "We weren't prepared to pay for the likes of SAP"
- 2 The ability to interface with third party software: "We have retail stores and retail software and needed to be able to integrate with that."
- 3 Consistency of data: "We wanted to be able to bring our history across from Premier, rather than run two parallel systems for years to come."

With its user-friendly nature and links with Premier, MYOB EXO was the obvious choice.

A trusted partner

To help implement the system and customise it to their specific requirements, ESR turned to Melbourne-based MYOB Platinum Partner Exoserv. According to Flood, things couldn't have gone better. "The moment I met with Andy [Ford, Exoserv's Consulting Partner], I knew the experience was going to be a good one," says Flood.

"Andy is technical, but he still sees both sides of the picture. He understood from an accounting point of view exactly what we needed, how that would tie in with the capabilities of the software, and how the whole thing would work in practice for our users."

"Perhaps more importantly," she adds, "I could see Exoserv were going to be solid business partners who wouldn't leave us high and dry."

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Implementation made easy

In the beginning, ESR and Exoserv scoped out the big picture. "I've done a lot of software implementations in my past life and none of them have gone this smoothly," says Flood. In no small way, that was down to the efforts of Exoserv consultant Mauro La Forgia, who was on-site "working all hours of the night to get the job done on time."

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Better visibility over changing purchase orders

One of the unique features of ESR's business is that they never know exactly how much they're going to be invoiced until the very last minute. "We might put in an order for 20 items, but actually end up with 24. It all depends on what our suppliers can fit in the container," says Flood.

What this means is that purchase orders at ESR are changing right to the moment the goods are dispatched. To help gain some visibility around this process, Exoserv designed a report in EXO that grabs purchase orders from ESR's web based EDI program and shows ESR exactly what is due to be paid (and when). It's a bit like an aged trial balance for creditors, only for purchase orders.

"This has been really useful," says Flood. "Before we were kind of flying blind. Now we can keep track of any last minute amends to purchase orders— and that gives us a better idea of what's likely to be owing in the next week or two."

Getting used to the new system

Flood says that amongst staff, there was little resistance to moving to EXO from Premier. "They missed some of the little quirks of the old system," she says, "but they could also see that we were pushing Premier beyond its limits, and were keen to move to something more suitable".

When it came to introducing EXO to staff, Exoserv made sure everyone was fully up to speed through a mix of classroom-style training and, where necessary, one-on-one tuition. "Like everything Exoserv have done for us so far," says Flood, "the training was very good. They're not propeller heads. They're easy to talk to and that puts people at ease."

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Improvements for today, compatibility for tomorrow

Assessing the improvements that EXO has brought to ESR, Flood says the reports have made a big difference. "Knowing when payments are coming up really has improved management visibility in a big way. So too, has F9 – which allows us to dump information to Excel for further analysis in a single keystroke.

"Even better than the reports are the screen enquiries," according to Flood. "Being able to double click and drill down for more information means you can keep an eye on what's going on across the business - without having to dig around to find what you're looking for."



Future assurance

In the next few weeks, ESR are planning to move to a new payroll system. It's not part of the MYOB stable, but with MYOB EXO sitting on an SQL platform, the two should integrate seamlessly.

It's that sort of thing, according to Flood, that gives you confidence with MYOB EXO. "On the surface, it's user friendly," she says, "which is great. But the reassuring thing is knowing that MYOB EXO will grow with our business in the future."

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| Before | After |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">> Increased transactions and volumes of data, meant a greater need for a robust ERP system> Early Settler and Collections merged - this increased the range of stock and the business complexity> Required improved management visibility. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">> A user friendly ERP with links to old system> Can keep track of all amendments to purchase orders> Easy access configurable reports make a big difference to business operations> No more digging around to find out whats going across the business. |