

bisTrack | Case Study



Stephen Fairbairn | Managing Director | Henry Alty Ltd

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Growing with Henry Alty

Progressive Solutions' bisTrack software has been running live at Henry Alty's since late 2003. The company approached the PSI team looking for a modern application package that would make life simpler at the trade counter. Most software they looked at handled the basics of buying and selling stock more than adequately, but bisTrack distinguished itself with its modern features, ease of use and its integration with other tools and software. bisTrack's unique dashboard feature, which displays live management summary information to authorised users, really appealed to Stephen Fairbairn. "It's very reassuring to be able to instantly access information such as 'total value of orders taken today', either in total or by branch – plus the profit margin!" he says.

The dashboard feature is always live and always available but can be customised to avoid showing sensitive or confidential information to regular staff.

Another feature which appealed to Alty's, as a multi-site operation, is bisTrack's internal messaging system, which can be tied in with the customer tracking features for reminder calls and timetabling follow-up actions. Communication between the three branches is achieved using a cost effective broadband connection – a cheaper and faster solution than the traditional leased-line communications.

Alty's also welcomed bisTrack's advanced pricing features such as the ability to apply special pricing rules to individual customers, groups, or during a specific time period. bisTrack also makes it easy to produce and print customer-specific price lists and to give authorised counter staff the ability to negotiate prices by applying percentage discounts or lump sum prices.

The bisTrack software was already a close fit for Henry Alty but some small changes to payment terms were created to allow long payment schedules for off-season fertilizer sales. These extended terms are a familiar requirement in horticultural supplies (and some other industries like ship's chandlery) to allow suppliers and merchants to maintain continuity in what would otherwise be strongly seasonal sales.

Smooth transition

Alty's went live with 24 bisTrack users in a 'big bang' changeover. Their options for smooth transition from their legacy software were unfortunately limited by the withdrawal of support by the incumbent supplier. As it happened, this presented no great problem for either Henry Alty or the Progressive implementation team. Because the bisTrack system is built in Microsoft Windows and looks a lot like Microsoft Office, it is easy to learn and use.

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Henry Alty

Henry Alty set up his brick making business back in 1877 – on the same 11-acre site the company occupies today. With the founder's great grandson Stephen Fairbairn now at the helm, the company has evolved into a well-established merchant business serving the local building and growing trades and turning over in the region of £9 million. Currently employing 50 staff and operating from three branches, the company is in the throes of developing part of its main site at Hesketh Bank, Lancashire, to provide new warehousing for building materials, plus a block of small units which will be let to local businesses.



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Smooth transition cont...

Alty’s staff took to it quickly and experienced no problems moving from a Unixbased ‘green-screen’ system to a modern Windows system. In fact most of Alty’s staff found the look and feel of the system so familiar that training costs and disruption to the day-to-day running of the business were minimal!

Keeping account

bisTrack is designed to interface with off-the-shelf, modern accounting packages such as Sage, Great Plains, Exchequer or, in Henry Alty’s case, Navision Accounts. Only one set of customer details is maintained, with their usage synchronised between the two packages. For example, this means that when a sales order is raised in bisTrack, a customer’s available credit is reflected in that customer’s accounts record and sales invoices and credit notes raised by bisTrack automatically update the sales ledger, VAT and general ledger. Likewise approved purchase orders update the creditors ledger – with user control over the coding of disbursements.

Henry Alty’s accounts staff all agree that since bisTrack was installed, invoices and statements are issued more quickly at month end, simply because accounting information is collated more quickly as the month goes along. They have also found that day-to-day work is carried out more quickly too as integrated, Windows based bisTrack lets them keep

everything open as they work – there is no need to come out of the nominal ledger, for example to access invoices or to close the sales ledger before transferring to the purchase ledger.

Back to the future...

Stephen Fairbairn accepts that although Alty’s is a traditional business, the company needs to keep abreast of technology. “We chose bisTrack because we needed to move on to the next generation of software. Progressives experience was important, as was the link with Microsoft, because we think that’s the way ahead for all merchant systems.”

Stock is still being bought and sold at Henry Alty’s just like it always has been, since 1877. The difference now is in the quality and availability of valuable, time-saving supplementary information, which is available at the click of a mouse and with the ease of use of a modern Windows-based package!

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