

Robin Somerville | Strategic Development Director | Building Partners

“ I asked lots of challenging questions and there was a positive answer to all of them, bisTrack ticked all the boxes. A Windows-based system was a big plus point for me. I liked the idea of a standard platform everyone is used to and how it's so intuitive for the staff to learn and use. ”

### Bowled over by bisTrack

General heavyside merchant Building Partners searched long and hard to replace their ageing 10-year old system, before arriving at bisTrack.

One feature Robin Somerville liked was how all the data in bisTrack is held in a standard Microsoft database. “This means it's easy for anyone with Microsoft experience to access and take data out of the system. Some other systems require you to use their own database structure and so you need proprietary software to access it. I prefer Progressive's approach. The Windows environment is very intuitive and appealing and I believe it's the way everything is going.”

bisTrack went live in September 2007 at the company's old site. This was one month before the company relocated, as Robin wanted the staff to be used to the new system before the move. No new hardware was needed – Building Partners already had servers in place to run other Microsoft applications such as email.

Robin says he felt confident as the 'go live' date approached. “I could see that all our data was being quite easily uploaded into bisTrack and we had chosen to employ a consultant to oversee the implementation and to be on site on the day. At that time we only traded until lunchtime on Saturday and so we chose that day to 'go live'. However, on the Friday, the consultant phoned from a hospital bed to say he'd been taken seriously ill.”

At that point, Robin said he was 'bowled over' by the way Progressive stepped in and effectively came to the rescue. “So many companies could have used our situation as an opportunity to hold us to ransom or simply say 'tough, we can't help'. But full credit is due to Progressive's implementation team who pulled out all the stops to help us.”

Robin and some of his team spread the job of importing thousands of items of stock into bisTrack over a couple of months. He described the task as 'a bit of a mission' but one which was made easier by suppliers providing the information on spreadsheets for direct uploading into

bisTrack. The staff had been trained how to use the system and a new key member of the sales team was already an experienced bisTrack user.



### Building Partners

Building Partners is the brainchild of Robin Somerville and Peter Buttle and was created as an umbrella operation so their two merchant businesses could share an outsourced back office. Six months after going live, Robin believes they have already made a six figure saving by sharing key resources such as the computer system and an accounts team, as well as being able to offer a better service and choice of products to their combined customer base. Buttle's and Long & Somerville continue to trade as independent companies, fulfilling orders for Building Partners.

The two bisTrack systems have been merged into one which operates from a data centre in London. This means that only one product file, set of cost prices, sales and purchase ledger is required as well as just one set of customer and supplier accounts. This is an important factor in stripping out costs so effectively. Customers can buy from any Buttle's or Long & Somerville branch and get just one invoice from Building Partners at month end.

bisTrack has been in operation at Buttle's and Long & Somerville for several years and both Peter and Robin are highly experienced users. The case study explains why Robin initially chose bisTrack for his business and why he's confident it's the right system for this new venture.

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“ I also like the fact that bisTrack plugs straight into standard accounts packages. Because we use Sage it's easy to find people who can use it and I didn't want a system with its own ledgers. ”

### Fleet integration

Building Partners run a fleet of four lorries but chose not to use bisTrack's Journey Planning module as they already had a system which was up and running and which the staff liked. Robin said because the bisTrack data was 'nice and open' it was a straightforward job to migrate it across to the existing transport system.

### Faster, better

At the trade counter, Robin believes customers are being served faster. "Because you can enter much 'richer' descriptions in bisTrack, staff (especially new staff) are able to find products much more quickly. In our old system, a hammer was 'hmr', which you knew if you'd worked here for 30 years, but was not so obvious to new staff! On the payments side, bisTrack makes taking deposits much easier and it's enabled us to strip out quite a lot of administration. We used to use a separate system for archiving documents and if, for example, we needed to see a delivery note from a month ago, it was fairly time consuming. Now, bisTrack's related documents feature makes it dead easy to find things quickly."

From a management point of view, Robin says bisTrack has made it easier for him to design and produce reports. "I like the fact that now there's no waiting for a report to be produced overnight. Now I can use 'cubes' to design my own reports and group the information as I want it...

...It's great being able to preview the information on screen too, even reports of 30 or 40 pages. I can also export information into Excel, by right-clicking the mouse, and then manipulate it to my heart's content."

EDI was always part of the plan and to date Building Partners are almost ready to implement bisTrack's eBusiness module. Robin says he thinks it's logical to use a computer today for routine tasks such as invoice matching, leaving skilful human beings with more time to concentrate on talking to customers or looking after credit control. "Up front, it's quite a 'mission' for us getting everything with the right codes on, but once we're set up, then that's it. It's a one off job.. Suppliers are our primary

target for EDI. Initially we'll use it with one or two of them but I like to think that within six months or a year, up to 90% of our suppliers will be using it. Potentially we will use it with customers who have the technology too."



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