

# bisTrack

## Case Study



Mike Maclellan | Managing Director | GPH Building Supplies

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### Landscaping niche

GPH offers a number of products unique to the area, including a large range of loose aggregates, popular with trade and DIY customers alike. Offering loose material from the bays at both branches means that customers, from tradesmen to DIY and members of the local farming community, can arrive with their trailers and purchase as much or as little as they need. An award winning display of landscaping products has grown sales over both sites for paving, slabs and fencing. Director Nikki Mortimer adds, “We’ve seen consistent growth over the last four years, particularly in landscaping products, which I believe is due to our approach of displaying the products so effectively.”

### Challenges and developments

The early days of using bisTrack were not always plain sailing and GPH encountered a number of issues which they worked closely with Progressive to resolve. Gary Brookshaw, Progressive’s Product Director, agrees that early users of bisTrack, such as GPH, contributed enormously to the development of the software. He says, “We’ve relied on working closely with our customers from day one. Many of them have funded or suggested changes that we’ve made generic enough to benefit all. This practice continues today and just makes bisTrack better and better.”

Four years on from implementing the core bisTrack product, GPH have become an early user of one of the newest modules — Scan Track. GPH’s Managing Director, Mike Maclellan explains, “We took the decision to invest in some sort of scanning facility, mainly to help us find related documents. Typically larger customers or local authorities demand a signed proof of delivery, which used to mean someone wasting time searching through archives. We looked at other scanning systems but liked the way Scan Track dovetails with bisTrack to show related documents, and it’s been a big success for us. We use it mainly to scan in proof of delivery notes but also for purchase ledger invoices. For example, if I want to double-check a price or the unit of measure on a purchase invoice, instead of retrieving a folder from the archive, I can just right-click and see the information on screen.”

### Daily stock counts!

Core bisTrack is also helping GPH with stock taking. In addition to the annual stock take, the team have instigated daily cycle counts for indoor products as well as selected yard stock. “This procedure has reduced the time it used to take to do our annual stock count,” explains Nikki Mortimer. “Providing your stock receipts are up-to-date, you can run a daily cycle count with someone counting a bin location or a bay number and coming back with meaningful data which can be keyed in, so you don’t have to recount at the annual stock take. Staff at both branches also use bisTrack to check stock at the other branch.”



### GPH Builders Merchants

GPH Builders Merchants, the independent Aberdeenshire-based company, was one of the first UK merchants to implement bisTrack. A company with a strong reputation among local builders for service and quality, it celebrated 25 years in business last year by moving to a new purpose-built three acre site in Inverurie. A second branch, opened 4 years ago, operates from nearby Westhill.

GPH’s customers tend to be small to medium sized building companies. Director Nikki Mortimer says, “Larger contractors and house builders tend to deal either direct with the supplier, or have agreements with national chains, many of whom have branches in our area. Our largest customer is just 3% of turnover — but we deal with the owners of the businesses, which we like”. Director Fred Taylor (who’s been with GPH from the beginning) says, “We’ve been trading with some of our customers for 26 years and built up strong, mutually supportive relationships.”



Nikki Mortimer | Director | GPH Building Supplies

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### Business intelligence

Nikki Mortimer uses bisTrack's reporting functionality to produce regular sales and margin reports for board meetings. Mike Maclellan agrees, "bisTrack gives us plenty of information" and uses the software to produce reports which analyse transport costs, or sales and margin by customer or by product group, as well as comparisons between delivered, collected and direct sales. Both directors regularly use the performance dashboard to compare monthly sales with the same period last year.

### Counter speed

Steve Grieg is GPH's IT and Communications Technician and likes the way bisTrack can be configured to suit the requirements of individual businesses. For example, to speed sales transactions, the touch screens on GPH's trade counter include buttons linked directly to the top five customer accounts (by transaction volume) — an idea suggested to him by another bisTrack user at one of the regular user group meetings. He has also shown sales staff how to check what a customer has been charged for a product at the other branch.

### Ready for eBusiness?

Given the nature of GPH's customer base and the fact that some suppliers still use an ancient typewriter to produce their invoices, is EDI a function the team are keen to implement? Mike Maclellan explains, "We know EDI won't work for most of our customers, but many of our suppliers trade electronically through buying societies, and so we've made a decision to put an EDI strategy in place, and I think it's the right thing to do. We understand we'll be one of the earlier companies to use Progressive's eBusiness module and we're looking forward to talking to other clients already using it.

"We will send our purchase orders electronically to our suppliers, they will go directly into their system and create a sales order, that's sent back to us electronically and tied up with the purchase order and stock receipt. One saving for us will be in not having to physically fax an

order or have someone sitting at a screen punching in the purchase ledger invoice. But I believe the biggest benefit for us will be forcing our team to have purchase orders spot on, to have all our stock receipts up-to-date and the prices on the system right. I believe these benefits will outweigh the benefits of not having someone to key in purchase invoices."

Nikki Mortimer adds, "There's obviously a lot of planning to do first, not least the conversion of some units of measure. For example our supplier quotes us for concrete blocks 'per 1000', but we buy and sell them 'per each'. It should help that we already store many of the manufacturer's codes on our own product records."

### Margin pressures

With Mike Maclellan citing pressure on margins as the biggest challenge facing him today, bisTrack helps by flagging low margin sales on its message board. He says, "Most of the time these turn out to be genuine price negotiations by authorised staff, but it's picked up some genuine pricing errors which we've been able to correct as they happen, which is a big bonus."

He concludes, "There's no doubt that bisTrack is a good tool. We've a fantastic record for growth and we're getting a lot out of bisTrack now, particularly over the control of our business."

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