

# Progressive News

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## bisTrack – a smooth roll out at Ridgeons

The implementation of bisTrack software has been completed at Ridgeons Timber and Builders' Merchants. A carefully managed roll out programme saw the final seven branches in Ridgeons' Central region go live in November 2008, bringing the total number of bisTrack users within the Ridgeons group to just over 600.

Whilst Ridgeons' users have praised bisTrack for its reliability and the instantly familiar Windows interface, Progressive's efforts have been massively helped by the very positive way that Ridgeons have taken to the system and their

pro-active efforts to spread product knowledge through the company.

Darren Tobyn, one of the Ridgeons Group Super Users, commented: "The ability to change and adapt the system to our requirements

was clearly a great positive." The users are excited by bisTrack's ease of use, multi-tasking ability and the power of searching for customers, products and documents.

At Ridgeons, the core bisTrack solution has been supplemented by Scan Track (document archiving) and eBusiness (for paperless trading) add ons.

Vince Badcock, Group IT Manager at Ridgeons said, "Since the Go Live was completed in November we have, with Progressive's assistance, resolved a number of critical issues that have enabled us to work smarter not harder by letting the system 'take the strain' particularly in the Credit Control arena, and are actively generating reports and Smart Views to help us monitor delivery performance, margin and sales activity. The next step is to unlock the potential of the Journey Planner functionality to enable us to optimise our transport fleet and maximise customer service."



Spring 2009



## Front bench approval for Progressive's new home

Ken Clarke, one of the best-known figures in British politics, recently visited Progressive's new building with Product Director, Gary Brookshaw and Financial Consultant, Ian Knox. The new building, scheduled for completion in June this year, forms part of the redevelopment of The Heath Business and Technology Park in Runcorn, where Progressive currently occupies office space. Announcing the company's plans to move into the new 7,500 sq ft building, Director of Operations, Arthur Duffy, said "Our most important asset is our staff, so it's essential that we expand into premises accessible to our team based around Runcorn."

Mr Clarke's visit was part of his inspection of The Heath's ambitious, multi-stage project to extend its 60-acre site with an additional 180,000 sq ft of offices and laboratories. He commented, "To find this kind of company thriving and the new building going on is very good and fills me with enthusiasm."



Shadow Business Secretary, Ken Clarke, tours the new building

# Building & Plumbing Supplies signs up for bisTrack

Leamington Spa based Building & Plumbing

Supplies Limited celebrates its 75th birthday in May this year by opening a new branch in Shipston-on-Stour – and by going live with bisTrack across all five of its branches! In addition to general building materials, this well established independent merchant operates a timber centre, and supplies luxury bathrooms, architectural ironmongery and garden and landscaping products.



## Noyeks Newmans and bisTrack — a case study



Mark Congdon believes that implementing the right management software is critical to the success of any business. As Financial Director of Noyeks Newmans, the first company in Ireland to implement bisTrack software, it's essential that he and his team have constant access to real time information, held within a robust system with all the functionality the company needs now and in the future.

### Robust requirements

Any system employed by Noyeks has to be robust. 100 staff across the group use bisTrack, they sell 3000 product lines and process approximately 600 sales orders each day! The software manages sales on the trade counter at all eight outlets and the field sales team can log on to the system in real time via their laptops.

Noyeks previously used SAGE which they had enhanced with their own modules. But it was running to the limit of its capacity and the time was right for a stronger platform. Four

systems were shortlisted and bisTrack was selected after considering price and the ability to develop in line with future requirements. bisTrack is built in Microsoft Windows architecture which means it's familiar to anyone who is used to other Microsoft applications, such as Outlook. It has been developed by a team with a deep understanding of how construction industry suppliers operate their businesses. The standard bisTrack package includes full sales order processing for cash and credit sales, stock control, pricing and discount management for delivered and direct sales from multiple locations. It links seamlessly with other Microsoft Office applications and accounts packages.

### Financial control

Using bisTrack's financial screen, Noyek's credit control team have easy and fast access to customer records and history as well as account age. They can place accounts on stop from within the customer record and drill down to see the full detail of a customer's individual transaction.

### Data warehouse

For higher end bisTrack customers like Noyeks, who are looking for comprehensive reporting with no impact on the system's performance elsewhere, Progressive has introduced Data Warehouse. Mark Congdon explains: "We're looking at this because we complete a lot of reporting by exporting data from bisTrack into Excel. Data Warehouse would enable me to control the reporting within bisTrack itself which will make it faster and more robust. We'll be able to tailor reports to individuals and they'll be able to get the information they need much more quickly."

Mark's overview of bisTrack is that it's intuitive, straightforward and a robust platform that provides quality, reliable information to allow traders to trade and that quite simply "it does what it says on the tin". He adds: "I can drill down into any business information easily, which enables me to analyse a situation very quickly. It gives me complete control."



## Less is more

Arthur Duffy was given a chance recently to get on his soapbox and encourage merchants to use modern business management software to help implement recession busting strategies. This is what he said in an editorial piece in Professional Builders Merchant.



Arthur Duffy, Progressive's Director of Operations

"We all know that the key challenge in a recession is to do more with less and this is precisely what modern IT is capable of delivering – by automating procedures, reducing human errors and saving time. These benefits can be translated

into hard, bottom line increases. However many merchants have yet to embrace anything more than a basic accounts only software package (or are trying to use an accounts package for stock controlling), and those that have taken the next step of implementing a fully integrated merchant specific package are often using a system designed 20 years or more ago. Whilst these systems are likely doing a job, they are often out of date, meaning they are relatively expensive to run, hard to support, and more importantly, are not helping the merchant save money or increase turnover.

One strategy is to ensure that all costs are tightly managed – good business practice at any time but obviously crucial during a downturn. Many merchants may not realise just how much more tightly costs can be controlled with the right software. Stock levels can be managed more effectively and automatically to prevent overstocking; transport costs can be reduced by more effective journey planning and pricing will always be correct with no danger of selling at old prices. Good software will also enable the credit control team to monitor customer payment patterns more easily, spotting changes in the average number of days taken to pay and forewarning them of possible payment issues.

The return on investment benefits are clear for merchants who are prepared to invest now in the right system for their business. When the good times inevitably do return, these are the companies who will continue to increase their return on investment – and their profitability – because they will be able to carry on doing even more with less."

*(Reproduced by kind permission of Professional Builders Merchant – read the full article at [www.progressive-solutions.co.uk](http://www.progressive-solutions.co.uk))*

## Forum events

Our regular forum events allow existing bisTrack users to find out at first hand how the software is evolving and the new features they can look forward to. At the latest events, they also met new director, Neil Richards, who explained how he was committed to delivering outstanding support as well as strong account and project management. As usual there was a chance to try out bisTrack's optional modules including bisTrack Mobile, eBusiness, Scan Track and Web Track.



Product Director, Gary Brookshaw, said there would be no less than 300 enhancements to the software, most based on feedback from users, in the next milestone release this Summer.

## Top twenty merchant picks bisTrack



Another of the market's biggest players, Elliott Brothers, has chosen to implement bisTrack. Bryan Eccles, Financial Director of the Hampshire based, family owned company, headed the search for new software, which led to bisTrack being chosen from a starting field of 10 systems. Mr Eccles said, "Elliotts believe that to provide a superior level of service we need state of the art software which provides accurate data on demand, with a capability to quickly process customer transactions, either in the field or at the branch."

"bisTrack's comprehensive functionality was clearly superior to any other on offer. This decision was ratified by positive references from fellow merchants already using the system. The system will require some modification to meet our specific requirements, but Progressive's commitment has been very encouraging and we have already found their team easy to deal with."

bisTrack is expected to go live across the company's 11 sites by the end of 2009, when around 170 users will benefit from the new software. Mr Eccles said he was looking forward to serving customers faster and more efficiently, and to using the sales ledger and credit control features to safeguard the company's business. Elliotts will also be using bisTrack's remote access facility to improve communication with sales representatives and to improve CRM performance.

# Phoenix rises with bisTrack

Just two months after its implementation, bisTrack software has speeded up trade counter service at Phoenix Merchants in Newry, County Down.

One of the most successful suppliers of timber and building materials in Northern Ireland, Phoenix was established in 1990 and describes itself as a heavyside operation which can supply its customers with everything from damp proof courses to chimney pots!

Phoenix had been working with an ancient legacy system which held price book and customer information and could produce basic management reports. But the system was coming to the end of its life and, with support no longer available from the original provider, the time had come to source a modern alternative.



Trade counter:  
Phoenix Merchants in Newry, County Down

## Traceability

Although it's early days for bisTrack at Phoenix, MD Jack McClenaghan is already enjoying the better stock control and management reporting he wanted. In bisTrack, all stock movements are traceable from receipt through to issue and it's easy to use bisTrack's 'cube builder' to look at figures and pick up patterns that would take an age to spot with traditional printed reports. bisTrack's customisable dashboard and Smart Views let you constantly monitor the key performance indicators which are important to you, in the style you choose.

## Faster service

There are six bisTrack users at Phoenix and it's on the trade counter where the system has already made the biggest impact. Phoenix's Andrew Taylor said: "Order processing is much faster now as you can use any search criteria to call up products. When we typed an order into the old system, if anything needed to be changed, such as the name on the invoice, we had to start it all over again! In bisTrack you can park orders if you're interrupted and then go back and finish them. It's so much more flexible."

Ronnie Magowan added: "On our old system, we couldn't convert quotes to orders like you can in bisTrack. And I like the way I can immediately check a customer's history on screen instead of going into the back office to find out what they bought and how much they paid for it."

Now, with internet access at the trade counter, there's also easy access to product specifications on suppliers' websites and a faster way to validate Irish customers' VAT numbers on-line. (Staff used to have to phone the VAT office each time and were invariably kept hanging on.)

## Impressive functionality

Jack McClenaghan is looking forward to developing his business with the help of bisTrack. "Although it's very powerful, there's nothing intimidating about bisTrack" he concludes. "It looks familiar and is really easy for the staff to use. And, although we're not using it to its full capacity yet, I'm fully aware of its potential. I was impressed with its functionality when it was demonstrated to us, but what also appealed to me was that the system is being constantly developed."

# Spring2009

## New services and support focus



Neil Richards has joined Progressive Solutions as Services and Support Director and will head a team dedicated to providing a proactive, excellent and expert service to the company's existing customer base. Neil says, "My aim is that we provide not only outstanding support but also strong account and project management to our existing customers. At the moment we respond to calls from customers about existing issues within their business. What I'm itching to do is to start approaching customers proactively to suggest and discuss ideas and opportunities for the future – and then to make them happen!"

Neil has over 18 years' experience in the IT industry, including nine years with Hewlett-Packard, most recently as their UK Sales Manager for Technology Services, managing service contracts of small and medium sized businesses.

## Progressive Solutions International Ltd

The Heath Business and Technical Park,  
Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4QX

Tel: 01928 592200

Fax: 01928 592252

[info@progressive-solutions.co.uk](mailto:info@progressive-solutions.co.uk)  
[www.progressive-solutions.co.uk](http://www.progressive-solutions.co.uk)