

New Zealand Electronics Manufacturer Gets ISO Certified with Acumatica



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– Nathaniel Fairweather, Managing Director, Triode

OVERVIEW

Founded in 2007, Triode Group Limited is a New Zealand-based manufacturer of parts for the electronics industry. It wrestled with uncoordinated systems to manage information, leading to wasted time and errors. Once the firm deployed Acumatica, these issues were resolved; not only did the company boost its productivity, it subsequently received ISO certification.

SITUATION

Triode Group Limited is a New Zealand-based company which manufactures parts for the electronics industry. Four years after starting in 2007, it found itself in a situation with which many start-ups can identify: as its business grew, it grappled with an increasing load of complex information which had to be shared among a growing pool of staff, vendors and customers. The firm struggled to organize its data with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, PDF files and accounting software.

Triode Managing Director Nathaniel Fairweather recalls, "We were using multiple spreadsheets, folders, files and even word-of-mouth to share information. To extract data on one job, we had to open something like five documents. None of the different systems we were using were talking to each other."

Because of this, employees wasted time looking for parts that were not properly tagged, and would mistakenly buy parts the firm already had on its shelves. "The problem just got bigger and bigger and it was a real nuisance. We realized we needed a proper system," Fairweather says.

SOLUTION

The company wanted a nimble and flexible ERP system which would easily accommodate its existing processes. "We are a small company; we didn't want to incur high integration or customization costs," says Fairweather.

It also wanted a web-based ERP, accessible from a browser, because it stored goods in Australia and staff there needed to access and upload information real-time.

After seven months of research, the company narrowed down the choice to Acumatica and SyteLine, a mid-sized ERP software package sold by Infor. Triode ultimately chose Acumatica in large part because of its integrated manufacturing software known as "JAMS" (for "JAAS Advanced Manufacturing Software"). Fairweather notes, "The JAMS was actually a crucial part of the decision to go with Acumatica. The fact that Acumatica had the JAMS module instantly put it onto our short list."

COMPANY

- **Industry:** Manufacturing and distribution
- **Location:** Headquarters in New Zealand; other operations in Australia; serving more than 200 customers ranging from one-person firms to large multi-national corporations.

KEY RESULTS

- Increased productivity
- (20% sales growth in one year)
- ISO certification
- Growth-friendly licensing model
- Right information at the right time

The other key reason for selecting Acumatica was the fact that the company would not have to pay for individual user licenses.

As Fairweather points out, "For a small company like ours, we might start out with five licenses, but as we grow we will need more, and we don't want to pay for every additional license."

The company purchased the Acumatica Financial Management, Distribution Management and Customer Management suites, with JAMS, on a perpetual license. It chose to host Acumatica on its server in a nearby city. Acumatica was deployed in early 2012, in a smooth three-month transition.

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BENEFITS

Ease of integration

Acumatica partner Virtual Empire, which helped Triode switch to Acumatica, says it was easy to integrate the company's processes. Kim Ong, the owner of Virtual Empire, says, "Many older ERP systems were not designed to be easily extensible, but Acumatica attracted us because it was designed from day one to be an application development platform for the modern cloud computing era. As customers grow, many of the new features they need are already there, or can be configured quickly, sourced from third-parties, or extended by in-house staff."

Productivity increase

While staff numbers grew by 15 percent in 2012, output and sales grew by 20 percent. "This signals that our productivity definitely went up," says Fairweather. "Now everyone has the same information and we are all looking at the same purchase orders and sales orders. Information is accurate and timely, and it is critical for a small company to have the right information at the right time."

Enabling ISO certification

One of the biggest pay-offs from the company's investment in Acumatica was that it received its ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System certification in early 2013. Mr. Fairweather states, "Without the Acumatica suite, we would certainly not have gotten ISO-certified." He particularly credits the JAMS module: "The integration of JAMS into Acumatica has been brilliant."

Fairweather notes that ISO certification gives customers more confidence: "It's ensuring that all the t's are crossed, the i's dotted, which gives customers a lot more assurance the product you're moving is consistent each time."

A key to their certification was the efficient and accurate management of information, according to Fairweather: "We framed our entire quality management framework around Acumatica, from document management to update processes. It was so well-integrated, the auditor had fantastic feedback, particularly on our document management."

A critical tool

A recent crisis illustrates how indispensable Acumatica has become to Triode. When their sprinkler system caused "massive flooding" in their offices, Fairweather reports, "The one fortunate thing was that throughout the chaos, I didn't have to worry about our ERP system, our integrity of the data or the security of it, because that was all off-site. That was the one peace of mind I had, that aspect of it was safe. As everything else slowed down throughout the office we could pick up a laptop, move it into the factory somewhere and we could still operate."

In general, Fairweather greatly appreciates how Acumatica has helped Triode: "It's been brilliant, and we can't live without it!"