

Ask Afrika Return on Investment R1.5 Million with Acumatica Erp



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– Elizabeth Barratt, Manager, Project Excellence

OVERVIEW

To keep up to date with the latest technology and innovations, work more efficiently and enable sustainable business growth, market researcher Ask Afrika wanted to consolidate its finance, project accounting and timekeeping software. With the implementation of Acumatica, the initiative created an ROI of R1.5 million through decreased software costs and increased capacity. Ask Afrika’s ethos is to look to the future and make the impossible possible and Acumatica offered the best solution aligned with Ask Afrika’s growth patterns.

SITUATION

With more than 23 years’ experience, Ask Afrika empowers its clients with fast, reliable decision-making capability through superior quality data collection, analysis and advisory services – providing actionable insights, recommendations and strategies. Ask Afrika is a full-service market research company with a Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) level 3 rating. Besides owning the most robust brand and customer service benchmarks, Ask Afrika is also the preferred partner for customers seeking proactive social research.

The Ask Afrika Group’s exclusive product suite includes the most relevant industry benchmarks such as the Ask Afrika Orange Index®, the Target Group Index (TGI), Ask Afrika Icon Brands™ and Ask Afrika Kasi Star Brands. The Target Group Index (TGI) alone, for which they own the South African license, is used by the majority of the top 50 advertisers and media owners in South Africa. The company’s work is project based, and at any given time the company may manage 100 or more projects. Keeping track of project costs, budgets, employee allocation, invoices and profitability created a logistical challenge.

“We were looking for an integrated system because our finances, project accounting and time-sheet allocations were completed on three different systems, which meant a lot of repetition,” says Elizabeth Barratt, manager of their Project Management Office. “It was time-consuming to re-extract data to make sure figures matched.”

The accounting team looked for a turnkey solution that would reduce the time that it took to create reports, verify data, and maintain accurate project budgets. In the past it could take up to eight hours to create a snapshot of company profitability.

“We really needed to have one integrated system where our sales teams could log their opportunities and we could track a sale and project through to a final invoice,” says Barratt. “When we instituted the systems that we were working on they were top of the range and suited a company of our size but Ask Afrika has grown substantially over a relatively short period of time. The fast pace of our growth necessitated that we institute a cutting-edge system that could evolve with us.”

Topline growth revealed that the current systems were no-longer suitable for Ask Afrika’s requirements and they began the search for an ERP system. to make sure figures matched.”

COMPANY

- **Location:** Pretoria, South Africa
- **Industry:** Professional Services: Market Research
- **Application Replaced:** Sage

SOLUTION

- Acumatica Financial Management
- Acumatica Project Accounting
- Acumatica Customer Management

KEY RESULTS

- Reduced time it took to invoice and track project budgets by 50 percent
- Allowed employees to be more efficient and productive
- Gained one version of financial truth
- Gained instant access to company performance which previously took 2 days
- Return on investment of R1.5 million

SOLUTION

Ask Afrika wanted a single integrated system where employees could easily retrieve accurate financial information on all projects, leads, and financial data. The new system had to be agile, accommodate company growth and offer advanced project accounting.

The company evaluated several ERPs, many of which it concluded were rigid and wouldn't allow the customization Ask Afrika desired.

"Acumatica's project accounting capabilities were very appealing," Barratt says. "We also liked that we could modify and customize it to fit our needs."

Acumatica offers a project accounting module, one that includes labor cost rates and project labor cost accounting integrated with payroll. In addition, companies can track new project quotes (convert opportunities to projects), simplify project sales and pricing, and create complex quote processes, which was important to Ask Afrika.

Ask Afrika worked with Acumatica partner Palladium, who helped to virtually demonstrate the appealing dashboard functionality, which was instrumental in the decision to implement Acumatica. "One of the outputs we loved most was the dashboard functionality," Barratt says. "The dashboards are very visual and vibrant and appealed to us because they fit in perfectly with our aesthetics." An added advantage was that Palladium was a local South African supplier which understood their needs and could help with customization.

BENEFITS

Return on Investment of R1.5 Million

Ask Afrika was instantly more productive after implementing Acumatica. Barratt and the finance team estimated they previously spent 35 hours a week on various accounting tasks plus another 28 hours using Excel to transfer data from one application to another.

They've reduced 63 hours of work to just 20 hours working in Acumatica, freeing 43 hours for the staff to focus on more strategic tasks. "Through decreased software costs and by increasing capacity, Ask Afrika has calculated a return on investment of R1.5 million," says Barratt.

Because Acumatica is easy to use and flexible, the company was able to independently customize dashboards and develop various reports to meet company needs.

"Our daily, weekly and monthly reports are quick to compile," says Barratt. "That means our staff have more time to utilize on billable tasks."

"With a click of a button we know exactly how our company is performing which enables us to take better and more informed business decisions," added Charlene Venter, Ask Afrika's Financial manager.

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Permission-Based Data Access

"We receive up-to-date, live data all the time," Barratt says. "That means flagged issues are current and anyone can log on at any time and retrieve the data they need." Accessing data from anywhere, from any device at any time also means there are no delays in their approval processes," she says.

"We have more control about what's happening in the system and who's doing what," she explains, adding, "We are on top of the numbers at any given time. "If someone updates something or a budget changes, Ask Afrika can track and monitor those changes throughout the system," she adds.

Live, Trusted Data Instantly

"Previously it was hard to track the many exports and imports required for manual reports and who initiated them. Now we have greater trust in our figures. We're not debating the accuracy of the figures anymore and can spend more time growing and developing our business."

Poised for Rapid Growth with Acumatica ERP

Because Acumatica is developed on an open platform, the ERP integrates well with third-party partners and Ask Afrika has the comfort of knowing that any future systems can easily be integrated.

Barratt recommends Acumatica to construction, IT and other companies operating on a project accounting basis. "Acumatica works perfectly," she says. "It handles project accounting, cash flow, project monitoring... But Acumatica is not just confined to project-based operations. Other departments like sales and marketing love it as well."