

IMP business sails smoothly with NetSuite

Having outgrown its Sage accounts package, IMP wanted to improve its IT to cope with rapid business expansion. In November 2012, IMP went live with a new business system from supply chain IT company Balloon One – a process that took just a few weeks and was achieved with Balloon One's support and understanding of IMP's business and IT requirements.

Hertfordshire-based IMP specialises in supplying high quality parts to the marine, coach building, construction and automation industries. The ISO 9001 (Quality Management) company is widely renowned for distributing international brands that enhance performance and style. From its purpose built 350-m² warehouse in Royston, it supplies more than 18,000 product lines to an ever-increasing number of customers – currently standing at around 8,500 UK-wide.

“Our business is growing strongly and at speed. Our existing IT could not cope with the rate of change or the demands we were making on it. Being server-based this also hampered connectivity with our remote workers as they were having to dial into the system using Remote Desktop Services and Virtual Private Network (VPN) and this was extremely slow and could be non-productive,” says Darren Bown, Sales Director, IMP.

IT has to be cloud

After looking at the enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems market, IMP eventually discussed its requirements with the Balloon One. IMP selected NetSuite, the world's number 1 cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. This system is deployed entirely over the Internet and is the on-demand ERP system of choice for more than 10,000 organisations worldwide.

With NetSuite, IMP did not need to worry about IT infrastructural requirements as the software is accessed using a standard web browser, nor



did the company need to upgrade its existing hardware to use it. Being web-based, the system is not tied to the office and it is accessible using any browser-equipped device, be it a desktop PC, laptop, tablet PC or smartphone.

“Our old IT was based around three separate systems – covering accounts and customer relationship management (CRM). We had no integration, which meant we could not get at the information we needed easily and this was impacting the business. We realised that we needed an Internet-based system built around a single, central database and one that could be accessed easily from anywhere at any time. Balloon One's team was able to bring the company's experience of wholesale distribution and its ERP knowledge to us and help us find a solution.

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“NetSuite has given us the power of a combined ERP and CRM system that is very user-friendly and flexible; we can readily customise it to meet our requirements as well as for our customers. For one particular company, for example, we’ve been able to set up the system to use its own product numbers. This means we can search for the order easily and automatically. It has made the process so much simpler and quicker, which is a benefit for customer service.”

Role-based dashboards

The system offers the advantage of being role-based. This means each type of user gets his or her own user dashboard depending on the role they perform within the company. The advantage of this role-based approach means each person gets the functionality and access to information they need to do their work at the highest level of efficiency.

Each of these roles fits within a workflow that provides everyone in the organisation full visibility of business transactions as they happen. For example, when the IMP sales team receives an order it moves through the system from them through to the warehouse for picking, packing and shipping, and then it

goes to the accounts department for invoicing. Information is entered once only and this eliminates mistakes and saves time and labour.

“Balloon One has customised the workflow to suit our business, giving us the ability to manage a sales order from margin to credit control automatically. From a CRM perspective, our

sales team uses the system to convert leads to prospects to customers. This gives us full

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Case Study



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“We then take the enquiries through to an estimate and when that is agreed we can convert it into an order, which we then fulfil. Once it is shipped and delivered, we can invoice the client. So, the system caters for all parts of the business and we’re all working on one database. This also gives us a complete audit trail, allowing us to see what actions were taken and when,” says Darren Bown.

Integration with carrier shipping system

To help with fulfilment, Balloon One has integrated NetSuite with IMP’s carrier, UPS. This simplifies despatch and consignment tracking, whereas before the company had to interrogate different systems to be able to respond accurately to customers’ delivery queries.

“The integration with the UPS shipping system saves a lot of time. We can notify our customers of their order tracking number and they are able to monitor the progress of their delivery themselves using the UPS website. Or if a customer calls us we can quickly find their order and click on the tracking number to update them on progress,” adds Darren Bown.

Gaining the benefit of BI

In just six months, IMP is seeing many productivity and efficiency improvements. However, Darren Bown says the greatest benefit is the new level of business intelligence (BI) the company has since implementing the system.

“We can see everything relating to our business on one database and we are able to cut out a lot of processes that were necessary with the old server-based software. In addition, we have much better credit control. However, the biggest thing for us has been the amount of business intelligence we now have at our

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fingertips. With the system, we can see what we are doing well and we can see what we need to improve. We are not restricted to reviewing annual reports and then implementing changes, we can proactively manage the business, minute by minute, day by day.

“BI gives us the ability to respond quickly and be proactive in managing our business – and this is helping us take the business forward. The dashboards allow us to see the information we need to make the



changes necessary to benefit the business, while continually enhancing our service to customers.”

Future integration projects

IMP has its eyes on integrating NetSuite with its website in the near the future. This will enhance productivity and efficiency further, together with improving service and communications between its customers and suppliers.

“We pride ourselves on the quality of our products and our service and with NetSuite we are able to continually improve our offering. By integrating NetSuite with our website, we’ll be able to handle a lot more business directly through it using the system’s built-in customer and supplier portals. We think this will provide a convenient platform for engaging with our clients and our partners, which will improve workflow even more,” adds Darren Bown.

About Balloon One

Balloon One is an IT provider specialising in the distribution, implementation and support of business software and supply chain applications. Balloon One’s goal is to make large scale enterprise applications accessible to small and midsize companies with solutions that are affordable and easy to implement that deliver a rapid return on investment.

Backed by 20 years of experience Balloon One has customers in a wide range of markets, including: packaging, toy/gift, clothing,

wholesale, retail, timber, DIY, education, leisure, IT, electronics, healthcare and chemicals.

In 2002, Balloon One was appointed as the first business partner for SAP Business One and today it is widely respected as a worldwide Business One centre of expertise. The company implements Accellos One Warehouse solutions and in 2007 was awarded Partner of the Year by Accellos for its outstanding sales and implementation success.