



CASE STUDY

AIRCOM International

COMPANY DESCRIPTION:

AIRCOM International provides consultancy, training and software for cellular network planning, optimisation, configuration and performance management.

PARTNER:

ADA Computer Systems Ltd and Timeweave

SECTOR:

Communications (Cellular Networks)

PRODUCT:

Microsoft® Business Solutions–Navision® SQL Server™

CHALLENGE:

To replace the out-dated and under-powered accounts systems with an ERP solution.

SOLUTION:

Microsoft Navision implemented by ADA Computer Systems Ltd.

- Financials
- Inventory
- Resources
- Jobs
- Fixed Assets

BENEFITS:

- A modern Microsoft® Windows® application which integrates seamlessly with the use of other PC applications
- Full range of ERP functionality to meet all their needs
- Real-time management information from their subsidiaries around the world
- Detailed analysis enables far better management decision-making
- Flexibility of application, easily configured
- Based on SQL Server, providing integration with other applications

SUMMARY:

The introduction of Microsoft Navision enables AIRCOM to effectively control their large, high-value projects undertaken around the world.

THE CUSTOMER:

AIRCOM International is an award-winning organisation that provides consultancy, training and software solutions in the field of cellular communications networks, around the world.

AIRCOM was established in 1995 by a group of leading cellular communications specialists, determined to satisfy the demands from network operators and infrastructure suppliers for expert mobile network engineering services and software tools. Today, AIRCOM leads the way by offering a fully integrated database solution for everything from network planning to customer support.

AIRCOM has grown substantially and is now one of the major global consulting service players in the cellular network engineering field with offices worldwide, including in the USA, Brazil, UAE, Sweden, China, India, Singapore and South Africa. AIRCOM's turnover is now approaching £30m.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE:

When Iain Tobin joined AIRCOM as Group Financial Director, it wasn't long before he realised that the old DOS-based accounts system that AIRCOM was using in the UK may have been suited to the company at one stage in its development, but wasn't ideal for the company AIRCOM had become.

"The flat cost structures supported by the old system were no longer in line with our global business with multiple departments, cost centres, projects and product lines," Tobin states.

TAKING THE DECISION:

Tobin had already had experience of implementing ERP applications in previous companies, so he had a good idea of what he wanted and what to expect. After a brief survey of the market he was attracted to Microsoft Navision, because of its level of functionality and the fact that it is based on SQL Server.

He had also seen Microsoft Navision in the past and was influenced by a very positive report on Microsoft Navision by consultants at his last company, Arthur D. Little International, the renowned management consultancy.

Fortunately for AIRCOM, ADA Computer Systems, who supplied the previous accounts system and who had a good knowledge of AIRCOM's business through their ongoing support, was also a Microsoft Business Solutions partner for Microsoft Navision.

THE REQUIREMENTS:

AIRCOM's turnover has grown from nothing to nearly £30m in less than 10 years, expanding across the world at the same time, with customers in over 80 countries and offices in eight.

Most of AIRCOM's business is based on large, high-value projects for which the detailed analysis of costs and margins is required in order to maintain their profitability.

"What we wanted was full ERP functionality without the overheads of a large system," states Tobin. He was impressed by the overall flexibility of Microsoft Navision, especially the ability to customise practically everything in the system including data views, forms and reports.

The use of SQL Server as the database to underpin Microsoft Navision also appealed to Tobin. He believes that being based on SQL Server helps to make Microsoft Navision inherently flexible and increases its capability to link into other systems. The ODBC interface also means they are not restricted in their choice of tools for extracting and analysing information.

THE SOLUTION:

Tobin wanted to change systems at the end of the financial year, as he believed this would simplify the transition, especially as a radical restructuring of the chart of accounts was envisioned. The only problem was that the window of opportunity for doing this was closing rapidly. This meant they had to work quickly to get the new system up in time.

The implementation was not only very smooth but also very quick. From start to finish, the whole implementation took only four weeks, from the order being signed to the old system being turned off. As part of that, it only took 10 days from the software being installed to it being used for real live data.

The process was helped by the fact that Tobin had implemented large-scale ERP systems in the past, so he already had a good idea of what he wanted to achieve. ADA Computer Systems were able to provide the technical implementation and support skills that Tobin needed to ensure a smooth implementation. According to Tobin, "The support we have had from ADA has been tremendous."

THE BENEFITS:

In comparing Microsoft Navision with their old system, the first difference that springs to mind for many people is that it is a modern application. These days people are used to a Microsoft Windows interface for all their applications and Microsoft Navision fits in seamlessly with the rest of the Microsoft Office environment.

The second benefit of adopting Microsoft Navision is the range of functionality it provides. As Tobin says, "From Fixed Assets through Sales Order Processing to Project Accounting, Microsoft Navision supports everything we need."

Along with functionality, two other important factors are flexibility and integration. "The fact that it is based on SQL Server and has an ODBC interface gives us the freedom we need to put Microsoft Navision at the heart of our IT strategy," says Tobin.

"It is always hard to give an accurate return on investment (ROI) for something like an ERP system, but what I can say is that it has definitely given us far more control over the business, by providing reliable quality data on our large projects and real-time access to group transactions, across the world."

As part of the implementation, a completely new chart of accounts has been created to support the complexity, inherent in the large value projects, which dominates AIRCOM's way of working. Tobin believes that Microsoft Navision has provided AIRCOM with the capacity for further growth. "We will be able to manage the finances of the organisation as we continue to grow without having to take on extra staff and resources," he says.

THE FUTURE:

Microsoft Navision is central to AIRCOM's IT strategy. Having ensured that Microsoft Navision has bedded in properly to the company, Tobin is looking forward to building other aspects of the AIRCOM IT strategy around Microsoft Navision over the next 12 to 18 months. Multinational HR systems and a CRM system all integrated with Microsoft Navision are planned. At the moment, the timesheet recording system, which was developed in-house, is still stand-alone but Tobin believes that the common Microsoft infrastructure will enable this to be easily migrated to become fully integrated with Microsoft Navision. This will not only reduce the level of manual input but also ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the data.

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