time@work

Well Oiled Integration for Whessoe with Infor SunSystems and time@work

Founded in 1790, Whessoe Oil & Gas now specialises in the storage and handling of liquid gases in both refrigerated and pressurised form. With installations ranging from Milford Haven to India, Whessoe has earned an international reputation for its ability to offer a total service capability to the Oil & Gas industry. Turnover has more than doubled in the last three years and a significant percentage of the company's team are based abroad or away from the company's Darlington head office.

The rapid expansion of the company over the last two years had put a strain on the internal IT systems, especially the accounting application, which was failing to meet the growing needs of the business. Wilf McNaughton, Business Systems Manager, admits that the system was cumbersome to use, explaining *"It no longer fitted with the way we do business – there was a lot of duplicated input and it sat in isolation from our other applications."*

Reporting was also problematic and analytics were non-existent. Much of the work undertaken by Whessoe is project based – building terminals and storage systems, decommissioning or modifying existing facilities or completing feasibility and scoping studies for new gas and oil storage installations – and dependant on the use and accuracy of timesheets. The timesheet system was a manual one that relied on accurate and timely completion by staff before being entered and manipulated within a spreadsheet application. *"The manual system was laborious and involved much duplication of effort,"* says McNaughton, *"We wanted to automate the process and integrate it with the accounts package for faster processing, invoicing and payment."*

Recognising that the company needed a modern finance system

that would provide them with the analytics and reporting they required as well as interfacing directly with other key applications, Whessoe embarked on an evaluation process looking at several different systems. *"We were impressed by Infor SunSystems and by the expertise and advice we received from the consultants. They took the time to understand our business and our requirements,"* says McNaughton.

Once SunSystems was selected as the back office finance package, the next task was to configure it to meet the needs of the Whessoe business model. *"We are a project based company and while we don't issue very many invoices, we do have to pay an awful lot of them therefore it was essential that SunSystems would interface with our newly acquired Materials System to eliminate duplication of entry, and make validation of invoices against goods received easier, resulting in better control, fewer invoice queries and faster payment for our suppliers,"* explains McNaughton.

Implementing a new finance system on its own is a major task but Whessoe decided that, in order to gain the maximum benefit, it would be appropriate to replace the existing Materials System with a fully automated and integrated system. The challenge was not only to get each of the systems up and running but also integrated and sharing information back and forth. *"We wanted to extract real costs from the accounting system back into our estimating system so that we could prepare more accurate costings,"* explains McNaughton.

The implementation team provided the technical expertise to develop the interface between the materials system and SunSystems purchasing. "*It wasn't an easy job,*" admits McNaughton, "*The integration turned out to be a major element of the installation. However, we are delighted with the outcome.*" Rather than depending on historical data the estimating team have access to live item costs which can be used to develop new proposals.

In addition, the time@work application was recommended to automate and manage expenses and timesheets, feeding through to SunSystems. The application has already been out to more than 400 users who are entering expenses and completing timesheets which are automatically processed.

Since "Go Live", the benefits of the solution to Whessoe are already noticeable. Improved productivity, accuracy and speed of processing are clearly visible. Invoice handling is also easier due to and integration with the accounts system. *"Simply automating manual processes has improved our systems significantly,"* says McNaughton, "*Automation has the added benefit of tightening up the processes making it much harder to cut corers, and that improves quality, productivity and efficiency – there is no need to look things up manually as information is available much more readily and the new system has removed the need for duplicate entry. The time savings are enormous.*"

The next step for the Whessoe team is to focus on reporting to provide business managers the data they need, when they want it; although McNaughton envisages a period of three months when they monitor the new systems before starting the next phase of development. "*The intention is that we want further integration with other applications and corporate systems but for now we are happy to enjoy a period of consolidation and planning.*"