

Builders' hardware suppliers choose the perfect tool for the job

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- Manager Nicola Bury

Customer fact file:

R & J (Builders Hardware) Ltd are based on the Whitebirk Industrial Estate in Blackburn. They are a family business, established 43 years ago, run by the second generation of the founders. They sell and distribute a wide range of specialist products to the building and allied trades nationally. They have 100 employees and 10,000 products.

What our customer needed:

The previous IT system at R & J had been in place for 20 years with no real complications. It was recognised by everyone in the business as reliable, fast and stable – a tall order to beat.

However, the business needed to grow and the decision was taken to research a new modern system that would enable the business to expand and for the system to expand with the business.

The aim was to implement a solution which would take R & J into the future in terms of:

- Facilitating more growth
- Tightening security
- Increasing speed of 'order-to-delivery'
- Savings on mailing

High on the 'must have' list were:

- Care of the diverse customer base, which ranges from small local builders, to major organisations delivering huge Government contracts and mainstream DIY outlets
- An IT platform which could integrate future technologies

The stringent requirements were to have 'exactly what was needed' and they called in a specialist consultant, who had actually installed and looked after their existing set-up, to advise on the selection of the new system.

The business researched and reviewed many of the heavily marketed and high cost, high end ERP products, such as Microsoft Dynamics, SAGE 200 and Strategix (the upgrade product available for their existing UNIX system).

Why our customer chose Logma

Logma's strong business focus, the flexibility of the OneFit product and assurances that implementation would be rapid and cause minimal disruption to the business really impressed the decision-making team at R & J.

The capital savings for a system of this size against competitors were substantial although not the main factor for choosing Logma and their OneFit solution.

Logma's approach to the design and build of the software to provide 'exactly what was needed' and ongoing professionalism in providing quality control meetings and reviews and the management of timescales genuinely provided the 'comfort factor' in assessing whether the right choice had been made.

What Logma provided

Logma's OneFit Software solution, renowned for product strength, flexibility and scalability, was chosen and implemented.

OneFit, a complete end-to-end software solution, provided R & J in Phase one of the implementation with complete sales order entry and control, stock management and Purchasing, special product deals and commissions modules, serial numbered and batch stock control, monitored warehouse system, touch screens for GI and Despatch and links to couriers for order tracking. All integrated with a strong financial suite.

Special features at R & J included:

- Dashboards - management control has been simplified by the presentation of dashboards, specifically focused on various operational departments including a discrete, totally interactive directors' dashboard which provides the directors with a 'real time snapshot' of the business in terms of both finance and operations.
- Screens monitoring movement of orders through the entire order processing and warehouse operations have proved to be a driving force for efficiency and performance.
- Touch screens in the warehouse for goods in picking, packing, dispatch and distribution were also introduced, providing measurable added value.

A parallel run in January 2012, to highlight any minor adjustments, made for the slickest of installations, with the new system 'going live' in February 2012.

The Logma team were on hand to guide and deal with all training and team concerns.

As OneFit is designed to grow with businesses, R & J have been able to add additional models as the business has expanded.

One additional 'added value' OneFit option, which went live in summer 2012, was a fully integrated web portal for discrete customer services for the 55 nationwide reps enabling them to use tablets, 3G and the critical 'off line' data capture for order entry. This has been a major step forward, cutting down on costs while improving sales team performance.

The Benefits

The throughput of the daily high level of multi-line orders and 'same day' dispatch supply cycle has impressively improved, taking the business from an already well managed and fast delivery, workflow and management operation into a position where the handling of the rapidly increasing number of orders easily, efficiently and cost effectively handled on a daily basis.

In addition the operation can continue to grow and, already, the flexibility has supported some changes in operation and structure of the business.

R & J's Onefit system has:

- Provided measurable added value
- Been a driving force for improved efficiency and performance
- Enabled costs to be cut
- Assisted sales team performance nationwide
- Provided the management team with a 'real time snapshot' of the business in terms of both finance and operations.

What our client says about Logma

Manager Nicola Bury, who was key to the IT system change at R & J, said: "We had a brilliant system with which everyone was au fait. Anyone coming in had a really tough job on their hands to convince us to change. We looked in detail at a number of other systems.

"When Audrey and Ron Odell came in they simply made the whole thing so approachable. I had no real knowledge of IT and they made the job easy to understand and, importantly, they listened to what we wanted and what we had to say. They really strove to find out exactly what we needed and wanted from our system and, unlike other providers, they were willing to mould things to suit us.

"The really great thing about working with Logma was that, when they were implementing the system, we never had a day where we were not operational in the transition period – no downtime at all. It was a really smooth transition. They came in at weekends to prevent us experiencing any problems. There were no major hiccups at all and that is gold dust in this industry.

"We have people who have worked for us for 20-30 years who were completely at home with the old system. Many of them were naturally concerned about the forthcoming change. Literally, within an hour of going live and Logma's guidance, they were all up and running and functioning ably. The system has made their lives easier and they are all happy. And, of course, a happy staff is a productive staff.

"There were no issues from day one of going live either. We can ring Logma at all hours of the day or night. They are contactable 24-7 and, again in this industry where we run a 24-hour business, that is so comforting. It gives us great peace of mind and there's no price on that. We are all very impressed.

"We find Logma very good people to deal with. They have a very good team behind them who are 'on tap' when we need them. They designed, installed and are now our ongoing IT caretakers.

"The new system is very sound. As we use it, we find new things that we want. There is so much scope for growth and we are actually growing with the system. It's made the management of all our operations so much easier, quicker and simpler and we can develop our business which was not an option with the previous system.

“What we really like is that Logma consistently come back to us with new ideas as they emerge. They constantly challenge our thinking and they are excellent at coming up with new and unique solutions which, importantly, give us the edge over our competitors.

“Without hesitation we would recommend them to other businesses and I am personally happy to talk to anyone about them. They did an excellent job.” Nicola is available on 01254 52525 or you can email her at nicola@rjbh.co.uk

See Phase 2 Case Study (to Follow) remote Sales Entry for 55 Salesmen using OneFit WebPortal and offline capabilities.