

Customer case studies

Clydesdale Jones

For more than 50 years, Clydesdale Jones has specialised in the design, development and manufacture of park brake levers and mechanisms. These products are manufactured to order for an illustrious client base of materials handling, agriculture and construction equipment manufacturers including such names as JCB, Yale and Caterpillar.

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Dave Keats
IT Supervisor



Industry	Manufacturing
Geographic	West Midlands
Employees	70
Solution	Access Supply Chain Dimensions
Modules	Core ledgers Sales orders Purchase orders Works orders Stock control Location & lot control Resource Engine (MRPII) Job costing Time recording Executive desktop AOI

The challenge

Clydesdale Jones has seen considerable growth of market share in recent years, which Dave Keats, IT supervisor, puts down to the company's ability to easily meet specific customer demands. “We have design engineers here using advanced 3D modelling, so we can accommodate pretty much any customer requirement. That's what sets us apart: we have the engineering expertise that allows us to be more flexible than our competitors.”

Continued growth meant that Clydesdale Jones was straining at the seams. “We'd outgrown our Walsall premises; a problem we solved by moving to a larger, more modern manufacturing facility a few miles away in Willenhall,” says Dave. “But we'd also outgrown our existing software system. We had to find a replacement that had sufficient capacity to grow with us.”

With the help of IT advisory body CUIS (the Computer Users Information Service), the company developed a tender document which it then issued to a host of IT suppliers. “We were inundated with replies and we took several months to review the systems.”

Dave and his finance director carried out the first-level evaluation which resulted in a shortlist of six systems. “We then brought together a cross-functional team to look at those six, review them, and cut them down to a choice of three for a final detailed review.” Throughout the process, Dave recalls that Access Supply Chain stood apart from the rest. “Even at the early stage, we could see that this was a product that offered everything we needed, with great manufacturing functionality and solid financials.”

We could also see that this was a company that had a clear commitment to continued development, which was very important to us. We didn't want to make a choice, only to find that we'd outgrown the system again in a couple of years."

The solution

The comprehensive evaluation process continued, before Access Supply Chain won out as the system of choice. "We did take a long time to decide, but it was important we made the right decision. And we are as confident today as we were then that we chose the best solution," says Dave.

The 15-user system took just three months to be implemented and went live following the Whit week shutdown. "We had an effective 'stop point' for manufacturing, so it made it easier to transfer static data to the new system," says Dave. "We did consider whether we should run both systems in parallel for a while, but we decided against that – both were so different and, although we knew it would be quite a significant change for users, we didn't want to risk them reverting to the old software and not using the new system. To gain maximum benefit, we had to get everyone using this from the start."

The Access Supply Chain solution is used to manage the entire business, both financials and manufacturing – the same scope as the previous system, but the similarities end there. "Previously, we couldn't run certain processes at the same time or the entire system would lock out," recalls Dave. "We used terminals which were linked to the server, so the whole corporate resource was on that one machine. That meant we had to limit work to particular days so, for example, sales orders were entered on Tuesdays, we ran MRP on Wednesdays, purchase orders Thursdays, and so on. It was incredibly restrictive, but that's the only way we could manage it without the system crashing. It was a real struggle and held us back as a business."

A true enabler

Now, the situation has turned full circle. Rather than the business being restricted by the software, the new ERP

system is a true enabler. In the year or so since the software was implemented, Clydesdale Jones has restructured many processes: "This is so much easier to use and less labour-intensive, so we've been able to use people in more relevant areas to benefit the business and have changed some roles and responsibilities. It's been so much more than a software upgrade – it gave us the opportunity to re-evaluate everything we do and the way we do it. And as people have learned new processes, they have often been able to suggest further improvements, so we are continually reviewing and improving how we work."

A great example of this can be found on the shop floor, where workloads are now managed efficiently and changes can be accommodated easily. Production scheduling has been transformed and the operation now enjoys smoother workloads without the severe peaks and troughs of old. "We are a make-to-order manufacturer and before we implemented Access Supply Chain, our forecasting was often erratic, to say the least," says Dave. "Now, the change is immense. The system allows us to manage works orders much more easily and forecast accurately. Our production planner used to spend his time chasing around to ensure jobs went out of the door on time – now, he's sitting down and planning what is a very smooth flow of work." There is less fire fighting and, crucially, less need for unexpected overtime working. "We have much better visibility of production orders and progress, and the smoother workflow has been a huge benefit to us." Data is now collected and entered on the system at points throughout the shop floor – previously, this information was input manually by an administrator.

Greater efficiency

But this improved visibility and access to data has brought benefits beyond the shop floor. Purchase ordering is prompt, efficient and accurate: "In the past, we sometimes had problems getting raw materials ordered in time because of the inflexibility of the old system," says Dave. "Now, we are forecasting accurately, we have

materials ordered on time and we hit the start date for manufacturing." All of which has had a great impact on customer service levels: on-time in-full (OTIF) deliveries leapt from 70 to 87 per cent in the first few months alone.

For Clydesdale Jones, the implementation of the Access Supply Chain ERP system has given unprecedented visibility and has been the catalyst for a widespread evaluation and improvement of business processes. And sharper processes and smoother workflows have equally widespread benefits. "We can be so much more responsive to customers than ever before," says Dave. "We can react immediately because we have a clear picture of our position across the operation." This is a business that manufactures brakes but it looks certain to enjoy accelerated growth – and is confident that Access will be supporting it all the way.

Benefits

- Better planning and decision making – greater visibility of orders and workloads provides accurate information on which to base future plans and forecasts.
- Greater flexibility – changes to schedules and workloads can now be easily accommodated, providing greater responsiveness to customer needs.
- Time savings – streamlined business processes have improved efficiency across the organisation and increased overall productivity.
- Improved customer service levels – on-time in-full deliveries leapt from 70 per cent to 87 per cent in just the first few months of implementation.

Who we are

Access specialises in the provision of fully functional ERP solutions for medium and large companies. Our modular system will give you a fully connected platform that can be constantly tuned and expanded – now and as you grow. Whether you are a distribution, manufacturing, assembly or service company, we provide cost-effective functionality for every aspect of your organisation.

Further information

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