

# Customer case studies

## Competition Commission

The Competition Commission is one of the independent public bodies which help ensure healthy competition between companies within the UK for the benefit of companies, customers and the economy. Each inquiry is led by a decision-making body drawn from a wide panel of highly skilled Government-appointed members.

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Sue McDonald  
Head of Finance



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| Industry   | Government/NFP   |
| Geographic | London   |
| Employees  | 150  |
| Solution   | Dimensions<br>FocalPoint   |
| Modules    | Core ledgers<br>Sales order processing & invoicing<br>Purchase order processing<br>Costing/project management<br>Microsoft Office Integration<br>SDK<br>Timesheets<br>Project control<br>Expenses & credit cards<br>Purchasing<br>Reporting<br>Workflow forms<br>Orbis Taskcentre<br>Asset manager |

### Business challenges

Successfully managing an unknown number of inquiries and associated costs within a Government-defined annual budget is the key challenge for Sue McDonald, Head of Finance for the Competition Commission.

“Because we have no choice over the number, and variety, of the referrals that come through, we are to some extent, at the mercy of market forces. But if we can establish the ongoing nature of the associated costs, then that’s half the battle.” The need to efficiently capture project-related data, as well as improved reporting facilities, therefore prompted the search for a new system.

### Finding Dimensions

After deciding not to upgrade their existing Sun System, the Competition Commission did some Internet research and made an appointment to view Access Dimensions at the London City office.

After seeing the web-enabled FocalPoint modules in action, the organisation agreed they’d found the system they were looking for. For benchmarking purposes, the Government raised several questions about the system’s functionality and price. The purchase fitted within neatly into the CC’s capital expenditure so the deal went through smoothly. After a similarly straightforward implementation, involving some detailed planning, the system was ready to go live.

### Reporting

The reports in the previous system were proving too rigid for the organisation’s purposes, forcing users to manually cut and paste data to get the information needed for decision-making. The situation was easily rectified through the development of a large number of tailor-made Crystal reports, which provide users with the exact information they need in seconds.

“Our reports are so user-friendly now,” says Sue McDonald. “There’s a lot of drill-down functionality so you can look what a figure’s made up of, which is also useful at the end of the month, providing me with the facility easily cross-check if anything’s missing.”

### Office Integration

Access Dimensions’ integration with Microsoft Office has also resulted in significant time-savings for Sue McDonald – particularly when it comes to providing information that has to be accessed by lots of different people, such as board packs. “Now, instead of having to re-format lots of reports, I place Excel sheets within a workbook, which is just so much easier for people to access and use.”

### Timesheets and expenses

Accurately accounting for the organisations’ labour and expenses was also a key driver towards visibility of costs. Previously, the organisation’s members filled out this information on Excel spreadsheets, which was then re-keyed into the accounts, leading to inevitable time delays. Now, all in-house staff enter their time via FocalPoint, which enables this data to be routed to an approver and directed straight into the accounts, cutting out time-consuming data entry.

### Purchasing and invoicing

Installing FocalPoint has also tightened purchase control. “Previously, a purchase request would take days to reach approval stage. Since installing FocalPoint, information is approved much more quickly. Now, purchase requests are raised online so that when we need to pay an invoice, we can quickly check and approve. The alerts also keep approvers on their toes so they tend to approve things far more quickly.”

### Creating budgets

“Gaining the information I needed to create a budget could take days of liaison with the project teams” states Sue McDonald.

Our web-based budgeting functionality (a module configured to the organisation’s specific needs) has really sped up the process. Each time we get an inquiry, I simply allocate resources to it – based on hourly rates, for example and make any adjustments as a team. It’s a much more efficient way of working.”

### Effect on the business

The combination of Access Dimensions and FocalPoint has, in Sue McDonald’s words, “definitely speeded up our internal processes. In terms of the project and service side, electronic authorisation has enabled us to reduce our 30-day Part Payment Statistic from 90% to 98% - and ultimately reduced the time taken to close our monthly accounts by 50%. And when I’m asked questions about costs, I can get the information instantly. I’m very happy with our system and would definitely recommend it.”

### Benefits

- **Time savings** - Tailor-made Crystal reports can be run in seconds, providing managers with complete, up-to-date information for decision-making. Previously, this would have relied on manual cut/paste methods which were time-consuming and error-prone.

FocalPoint enables many more people within an organisation to enter and access management information, meaning that the data is ready to process more quickly, reducing the time to produce month end reports by 50%.

- **Efficiency gains** - Budgets can be created quickly then modified, tracked and updated as projects progress. This eliminates the need to spend extensive time with project teams.
- **Cost control** - Decision-makers can see at a glance where projects face going over budget and can take preventative action.

- **Visibility** - full audit trail with drill-down provides transparency of where funds have been spent

### Who we are

Access will give you the advice, tools and clarity you need to make effective decisions, quickly and with certainty.

As both a business-focused consultancy and a specialist software developer, we combine our innovative software with practical experience to deliver a solution that’s exactly right for you and your business.

You can rely on us to provide you with a solution that’s simple, proven and relevant to your company. We have over fifteen years’ experience of developing software here in the UK and our regional consultants have tailored and implemented this software all over the UK and Ireland. The expertise we’ve gained gives us an unbeatable ability to accurately assess your needs and deliver maximum impact with ease and confidence.

We believe your solution must be ready for the future, as well as right for today. Because your business will constantly evolve, we provide a software solution that grows with you. Our modular software covers a complete range of business, financial and administration processes and can be flexed to give you the precise view of your business that you need at any time.

Our supportive consultants combine their first-class software expertise with in-depth industry knowledge to constantly improve and simplify your business processes so that your solution delivers maximum value and a continual return on investment.

With Access, you can be sure you’ve got the clarity you need to reach your business goals.

### Further information

For further information on this, or any other Access case studies, please telephone us on 01206 322575, email [case-studies@theaccessgroup.com](mailto:case-studies@theaccessgroup.com) or, alternatively, visit [www.theaccessgroup.com/downloads/case-studies.aspx](http://www.theaccessgroup.com/downloads/case-studies.aspx)