

Customer case studies

De Agostini UK Ltd

Founded in 1901, De Agostini is the world's leading publisher of partwork magazines. The company's UK division joined this marketplace in 1970 and has developed its own range of hugely successful titles, covering subjects as diverse as cake decorating and dinosaurs. De Agostini UK is now the number one publisher of partworks to English speaking countries.

"On our old system it would take a box of paper and a half a day to run one report. With our Access solution, we can run the same report in seconds."

Peter O'Dwyer
Group Accountant



Industry	Publishing
Geographic	London
Employees	138
Turnover	€233m
Solution	Access Dimensions
Modules	Core Ledgers Sales Order Processing Costing Invoice Register

Company overview

De Agostini Editore is responsible for coordination and strategic and operational management, in Italy and world-wide, of all the Group operations in the publishing sector, which are organised in businesses areas. De Agostini Editore S.p.A. publishes in 13 languages and in 30 countries with activities focussed on the organisation and communication of knowledge.

Choosing & implementing Access

Back in 1994, De Agostini UK began the selection process for a new accounts system; a move that was prompted in large part by the flat structure of its existing software. Because records could not be linked together, everything pertinent to a given task or activity had to be contained in a single, isolated field.

This made reporting extremely cumbersome and labour intensive.

During the selection process, Access was evaluated alongside packages such as Maconomy and SAP. While they all offered broadly similar levels of functionality, the value for money provided by Access Dimensions (with an Oracle database) proved decisive.

Installation in the company's London HQ was completed in December 1994 and Group Accountant, Peter O'Dwyer, was delighted with the outcome.

"Access provided us with excellent levels of information and powerful in-built search facilities... while the speed and efficiency of the overall system was very impressive."

In fact, the London implementation proved so successful that De Agostini was soon rolling out Access Accounts to three of its sister companies, based in Japan, Germany and the Netherlands. In 2001, the combined turnover of these companies was in excess of £79 million.

Improving sales order processing

Companies in the De Agostini group routinely process huge volumes of data: in the UK, sales ledger transactions can exceed 20,000 per month, while in Japan this figure climbs to 60,000. Because it is essential to keep manual processing to a minimum, many of these orders are received electronically.

Similarly, the majority of De Agostini's invoices are raised using a bespoke circulation system. This is integrated with Access Dimensions and feeds all the relevant data straight into the Access sales ledger. The SOP module within Access Dimensions is also used, to raise any ad-hoc invoices that fall outside the scope of the bespoke system.

SOP with integrated fax software

With fully integrated faxing, De Agostini's credit controllers are able to issue chase letters directly from the Access Dimensions sales ledger. "We can pull up overdue invoices and issue reminders to our customers by fax, complete with our logo at the top of the page and a scanned signature at the bottom. This saves times and reduces errors," says Peter.

Improvements to costing

As a multinational organisation De Agostini is always looking for new markets – and this is where the Access Dimensions Costing module comes into its own. When a publication proves successful, it may be sold out to companies in other countries. The Costing module tracks all the associated expenses and these are recharged to the local distributor. Access Dimensions allows

De Agostini to quickly identify who needs to be invoiced for which titles, to apply any mark-up and then raise the invoice, all from within the Costing module itself.

Electronic invoice tracking

With over 3,500 invoices in an average month spread across six major departments, keeping on top of the purchase ledger could prove to be a major challenge. A paper-based system is totally impractical – finding one particular invoice could take forever. Prior to implementing Access Dimensions, De Agostini had already developed the ability to track invoices electronically. Matching this capability was a pre-requisite for the Access Dimensions system, as Peter explains. "Without this, we could never meet the reporting standards set by head office."

He continues, "Access meets this requirement head on. It allows us to see the value of any outstanding purchase ledger invoices at any given moment. This is a particular bonus at Year End. Then we can quickly establish which invoices need approval – and apply pressure to the relevant heads of department to get them through on time."

Streamlined reporting

With over 500,000 nominal accounts, 2,000 suppliers, 15,000 purchase ledger invoices and 240,000 sales ledger transactions per year, the ability to pinpoint precisely what you want to analyse – and to report on it quickly – is also essential. The reporting facilities built into Access Dimensions have enabled De Agostini to do exactly that, reducing the time taken to prepare management information and making the organisation more profitable.

"On our old system it would take a box of paper and half a day to run one report. With our Access solution, we can run the same report in seconds. The drill down and multiple levels of analysis enable us to pinpoint exactly what we need. And once we have

picked exactly what we want using the sort function, we can even display it precisely how we want to," says Peter. This processing speed enables the company to run its management accounts monthly and have them completed 10 days after month end. Prior to Access Dimensions, accounts were only prepared quarterly because of the time and expense involved. This delayed the flow of valuable financial information.

"Our solution enables us to act a lot quicker," Peter explains. "In our business, decreasing sales are inevitable. But some titles will dip faster than expected. Access Dimensions enables us to identify these trends and cut our print runs quickly. And the bottom line is that this saves us money."

Peter concludes, "Access Dimensions has certainly made us more efficient. Eight years ago, when we started using it, I could have listed a million and one things that were an improvement on our previous system. Today, we take it for granted."

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.

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.

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

Further information

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