

# Customer case studies

## Freedom Group

Freedom Group, part of Spice Plc, is a world class provider of construction and maintenance services to the utility sector and industry within the UK. Freedom operates from its head office in Wakefield and has 12 offices throughout the UK.

“Dimensions fits the bill perfectly and coupled with the solid, reliable double-entry accounting features, we have complete accuracy and audit traceability”

Andrew Chaplin  
Finance Projects Manager



Industry	Construction
Geographic	Yorkshire
Employees	51-100
Turnover	£21-50m
Solution	Dimensions FocalPoint
Modules	Core ledgers Purchase order processing Sales order processing & invoicing Invoice register Costing/project management Stock control Serial number tracking Sub-analysis/ multi-location Credit control Microsoft Office integration CIS Transaction broker Timesheets Expenses

### The challenge

As Freedom Group grew, so did the number of business and accounting products being used by the company. These included three Sage products and Ramesys AXiM, making it difficult to extract the information that was required at group level due to lack of integration. The systems did not meet the complex needs of the company, such as reporting on profit and loss at three levels – divisional, sub-divisional and by ‘service island’.

Andrew Chaplin, Finance Projects Manager for Freedom Group, comments, “It was very difficult to make comparisons using the previous systems. It took time to pull together the data that was required by senior management for reporting and decision making purposes – the lack of real-time

information was becoming an issue.

“We also needed a flexible web-enabled system for staff to fill in timesheets, absence and holiday requests, as well as the functionality for online project management, procurement and requisitioning – all through a standard web browser. This required a total overhaul of our systems and a solution that could be used across the group – we needed to streamline our business processes to ensure our continued success.”

### Transforming the business

He continues, “We initially shortlisted three possible companies but the Access Dealer stood out as a clear winner. Its professionalism was also a major factor in our decision.”



With six different service islands in the group, and 700 staff, including around 300 field engineers and 120 project managers, the business and accounting software requirements were complex. The Dimensions software from Access ticked all the boxes for Freedom Group with the multi-dimensional aspect of the group's operations being well-supported by the solution. Andrew comments, "We needed complete visibility across the entire company, and Dimensions delivers that. For example, we can easily access profit and loss information for every single sub-division of every company within the group and make comparisons between them. Key information, such as group sales and top customers and debtors, is also available in real-time - all from one enquiry screen, making it easier for our managers to make decisions and deal with any potential issues as they occur.

"In addition, our month-end reporting processes have been significantly streamlined, which has been a major factor in helping us to more easily meet our stringent Plc reporting requirements."

Andrew was particularly delighted with the flexibility of the innovative solution. "Dimensions has all the functionality and flexibility that we need to fit with our detailed business processes - and its ability to seamlessly integrate with other software such as our own job management system has been of huge value. The integration with third-party software is very impressive."

"The solution also has its own costing feature within the financial package which is crucial for the operational side of our business - other products do not offer this level of functionality," says Andrew.

### **Project management**

As the business is largely project-based, it was imperative that the chosen solution would help them manage the full project life cycle as effectively as possible. Through FocalPoint, (Dimensions' suite of web-enabled modules) Freedom Group is now able to set, monitor and control budgets as well as track work-in-progress and bill directly from the system. Managers can allocate resources to particular projects and view the number of hours an individual - such as a design engineer, estimator or maintenance delivery driver - has been allocated to a specific activity. It also provides complete visibility of workflows throughout the business, with approvers of budgets for instance receiving automatic alerts when action is required. As the workflow rules are completely configurable, Freedom Group can impose its business processes on the software - rather than vice versa - putting them firmly in the driving seat.

"Comprehensive project management and control functionality was crucial. Dimensions fits the bill perfectly and coupled with the solid, reliable double-entry accounting features, we have complete accuracy and audit traceability," says Andrew.

"Our project managers really took to the system with one manager commenting, 'I love it, think it's great' - the user-friendly innovative look and feel of the system has been a key factor in this acceptance."

The screens can be tailored to individual requirements, providing just the information they need, in the format they need it. Selected fields can be automatically pre-populated with details such as project code, not only making data inputting more accurate but also less time consuming.

### **Environmental concerns**

Freedom Group also places great emphasis on environmental concerns, alongside a growing number of its customers, so it is looking to the new system to help it manage the information required.

Andrew comments, "For one of our customers, we have to provide a carbon footprint report on a quarterly basis. This provides a breakdown of our expenses, monitoring how we travelled as well as the number of miles travelled. Dimensions makes it incredibly easy for us to track this information."

Indeed, it is the policy at Freedom Group to ensure purchase orders, remittances and payroll information are all emailed to cut down on paper wastage. "We try to print as little as possible - all payments are made by BACS. With the help of our new business and accounting system we will look more closely at how we can track the impact of our working practices on the environment. It's something which is very important both to us and our customers."

### **Future-proof**

When Freedom Group was looking for a system that would be future-proof, Access was the obvious choice. "We needed a system that would stand the test of time and bring all of our existing solutions together," says Andrew.

"In summary, the adoption of our Access solution has streamlined our business processes and delivered accurate up-to-date information to those who need it. We are confident that the system will continue to support us fully as we continue our growth plans in the coming years," he concludes.

### **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)