

# Customer case studies

## Rapiergroup

An events management and communications specialist, Rapiergroup offers a complete creative service from 3D displays through to graphics and print. Founded in 1988, it has seen healthy growth within the US and UK and counts BAE Systems, Lexus, Renault and Shell among its clients.

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Helen Seaman  
Group Financial Director



### The journey

Helen Seaman, group financial director, joined Rapiergroup in 1996. Back then, the company was running a Sage Line 50 system. However, limitations with the costing functions prompted the search for a new solution. “We run a lot of projects, and we weren’t getting the information out that we needed,” says Helen. This led to a meeting with Access to see the company’s business & accounting software, Dimensions, in action.

### The discovery

Fully convinced by its costing capabilities, Rapiergroup swiftly moved onto Dimensions – and noticed an instant difference. “Our Access solution gave us a completely new dimension in terms of viewing projects; we had far more control, and the reports gave us the exact information we needed.”

Having used Dimensions successfully for several years, Helen began to look for new ways of making her team more efficient. “Around 77 per cent of our costs are salary-related, and we wanted to get a handle on our true project costs. We relied on a full-time member of the accounts team to re-key timesheets into Dimensions, which wasn’t a good use of their time.” Having discussed these needs with her account manager, Helen undertook a demo of FocalPoint, Access’ web-based portal.

Being an online solution, FocalPoint provides site-based and creative staff with a convenient way to capture information such as timesheets and expenses, complete with an in-built approval workflow. Following the demo, Helen was convinced it was the right fit for the company’s needs.

<b>Industry</b>	Professional services - communications agency
<b>Geographic</b>	Herts (headquarters) USA (satellite office)
<b>Employees</b>	100+
<b>Turnover</b>	£20m+
<b>Solution</b>	Access Dimensions Access FocalPoint
<b>Modules</b>	Corrections Costing POP SDK SOP & Invoicing Stock Control Expenses/Credit Cards Project Management Purchasing Sales & Billing Timesheets Workflow Forms Access TaskCentre

## Implementation

Rapiergroup decided to implement the Timesheets module first. "Access consultants were supportive throughout the planning process" says Helen. "When they're on site, they give 101 per cent to the cause; you can tell they love a challenge. My recommendation for any business thinking of implementing FocalPoint is to keep it simple to start with. The Access team can do almost anything so don't try and do it all at once."

## The result

Having implemented FocalPoint, Rapiergroup has seen benefits across all areas of the business, including:

### A reduction in overheads

Rapiergroup soon felt the benefit of electronic timesheets. "Our manual system was proving a lot of work and FocalPoint transformed that overnight. In fact, the FocalPoint Timesheets module proved so efficient that we were able to reduce our administrative costs by 20K per annum within three months."

### Tighter control over expenses

With Timesheets an instant success, Rapiergroup made the decision to implement Expenses. Also web-based, this module allows staff to enter claims as soon as they've been incurred – leading to greater visibility and prompt reimbursement of claims.

Previously, Rapiergroup had to raise inter-company invoices and recharge expenses appropriately; now, employees can simply enter their expenses online and FocalPoint does the rest. "As an employee who does a lot of travel to the US office, this is so useful... it's so quick and easy."

Day-to-day, I find the mileage picker really useful as it saves time re-keying frequent trips between the same offices," says Helen. "And from a management perspective, we can see the costs directly, in real-time – it's given us a great deal of visibility."

## Stronger client relationships

Rapiergroup has also been able to react more quickly to client requests. Using the FocalPoint Project Management module, creative staff are able to upload graphics to the system and quickly pull up the relevant information when a client gets in touch. "Now, when people ask which graphic they used last time, we can instantly give them answers."

FocalPoint can also be extended to clients, using special user privileges to view, for example, projects at various stages of completion. "This has enabled us to establish a tighter process for proofing work, which ultimately saves time and improves profitability," says Helen.

## Time savings

Convinced by the labour-saving capacity of the Timesheets and Expenses modules, Rapiergroup soon rolled out the purchasing functionality. So not only are staff able to raise POs in Dimensions, they can now do it online via FocalPoint. "Little things like being able to log on online and duplicate an existing invoice – is really labour-saving."

## Workflow Forms increases efficiency

Rapiergroup also has ties with an after-school activity club for children, for whom it runs the accounts. Prior to implementing Dimensions, keeping track of key tasks – such as managing waiting lists and accurately billing parents – was labour-intensive, mainly due to the clubs' paper-based processes.

Access has created an electronic workflow for the key processes involved. This makes it easy for the club to submit the required information online and for Rapiergroup to do everything from billing to reporting in the click of a button. "I'm so impressed with Workflow Forms; it's enabled the club to maintain their core focus while making life very easy for us. I would recommend it to all the clubs in the area!"

## Post implementation

On a day-to-day basis, Rapiergroup has found Access Support to be fully competent. "The Access helpdesk is very good. In fact, we hardly ever call about Dimensions because it's such a stable platform."

In terms of training, Rapiergroup has created its own 'Idiots guide to FocalPoint', which allows new starters to quickly get up to speed. "For the majority of users, we spend very little time or cost on training – it literally takes an hour to show people how to enter timesheets, expenses and purchases, which can be done as part of the induction process. That's the beauty of the FocalPoint; it's so easy to use."

FocalPoint has been so successful that Rapiergroup has rolled it out across its UK and US offices. The next project in the pipeline is Document Management. "Currently we don't have any visibility of invoices that arrive into the US office; Document Management will enable us to scan the information and make it available centrally, which will really speed things up. We're also considering automating the process to make it even more efficient."

## Summary

Rapiergroup now has a fully embedded accounts system with a project management system over the top. By replacing many paper-based processes with electronic, workflow-controlled ones, the company has seen benefits across all areas of the business ranging from labour savings and faster processes to cost reductions in admin and overheads.

Concluding, Helen says, "FocalPoint is great. It's saved us time, increased accuracy and tightened our processes to the extent that it's more than paid for itself several times over. I would definitely recommend FocalPoint to any company in the creative sector."

## Further information

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