Alex Fraser's IT overhaul improves customer service and primes it for future growth

About Alex Fraser

Alex Fraser Group is Australia's leading construction and demolition materials recycler with six major recycling centres in Victoria and Queensland. It is a private organisation that has operated for over 130 years. Recognised internationally for its technical expertise and as a pioneer in recycling, Alex Fraser provides Construction and Demolition Materials Recycling, Demolition, Asphalt, RecycleBin™ services, Steel & Salvage Sales, Mobile Crushing, Environmental Services and Special Projects. The company has the capacity to produce in excess of 3 million tonnes of recycled product every year,and has recycled 20 million tonnes of concrete since 1985. An environmentally aware organisation, the recycled road-based and aggregate products produced by Alex Fraser use 65% less carbon dioxide than any equivalent quarry product.

The Business Challenge

In the mid 80's, Alex Fraser embarked on the most significant sustainability initiatives ever seen in Australia with its demolition recycling. Through significant growth, its business demands quickly superseded its infrastructure, forcing it to add various disparate applications as and when needed in Melbourne and Brisbane. This resulted in multiple technologies and information silos and it became increasingly difficult to have standardised procedures, operate efficiently, or make management decisions.

Because of the limitations imposed by the existing IT infrastructure, many business processes were manual, duplicated and prone to error. With the lack of synergy between the Queensland and Victorian operations, software could not be optimised and no upgrade and ongoing development paths were possible.

One of the key difficulties resided within the weighbridge operations that had been set up as stand- alone units. Both inbound and outbound products that were required to be weighed were subject to complex pricing structures. Without access to business information, operators relied heavily on memory or outdated price lists that would later have to be rectified with the customers during the invoicing phase. With so much to do, the operators were under incredible pressure, with trucks often facing unnecessary wait times.

Tracking of the trucks and other waste equipment was becoming impossible to manage – the use of magnetic whiteboards proving to be unreliable - adversely impacting the bottom line.

With a new recycling plant worth over $45 million opening at Laverton in November 2009, and an additional plant expected to open in Clayton, plus further and plans to expand its Epping operation, Alex Fraser was not equipped to handle the growing demand.

Leading construction and demolition materials recycler, producing up to 3 million tonnes of product every year.

Difficulties in operating efficiently due to multiple disparate technologies and information silos.

Business processes were manual, duplicated and prone to error.

Customer service and the bottom line were being impacted adversely.

Existing IT infrastructure was not scalable for future growth.

Fenwick Software selected to customise and implement Microsoft Dynamics NAV/ enwis).

The Business Solution

After a stringent review process, Alex Fraser selected Fenwick Software to implement a single, integrated ERP solution tailored specifically to support its complex waste management business. Leveraging Fenwick's 30 years of IT implementation expertise, together with the market leading enwis) waste management and recycling industry solution, Alex Fraser chose to consolidate its business processes and improve its supporting technology in a single project.

The enwis) software is seamlessly integrated with Microsoft Dynamics NAV to provide a complete ERP solution. It is Europe's leading solution for the waste management and recycling industry, currently used by over 180 companies.

"Fenwick Software was the only organisation that offered a fully integrated ERP solution that could meet our specific recycling and waste management business requirements," said Craig Bishop, Manager Information Technology Services Manager, Alex Fraser Group.

To commence the project, Fenwick Software, in collaboration with Alex Fraser, conducted business discovery workshops to clearly establish the status and needs of each business function, including accounts, payroll, purchasing, and the weighbridge operations that incorporated quoting and invoicing.

"We wanted an IT service provider that we could work with seamlessly in partnership. Fenwick Software was professional and responsive with the right expertise in ERP– making them a good fit for our organisation," said Craig.

Following the discovery process, Fenwick Software developed a business requirements roadmap to enhance enwis) and replace the existing accounting, payroll and multiple invoicing systems into a single integrated solution. Freeing Alex Fraser from its reliance on disparate systems, enwis) had the power and functionality to replace Nexus, QPack, RMS and Attaché in a single implementation, from the weighbridge right through to the General Ledger.

Enhancements included customised eDocuments that allows quotes and invoicing to be automatically e-mailed to its clients; integration with payroll; and real-time integration to the remote weighbridge operators.

Data was standardised and integrated into a single SQL server and mapped to support the business processes. With a user-friendly interface, data became fully visible across the organisation in a meaningful format, allowing slicing and dicing as well as the production of complex reports at the click of a button.

"Fenwick Software provided excellent project management and support throughout the project," said Craig.

Creating a central IT hub based in Melbourne, Fenwick Software rolled out its answer to the ERP challenge in three phases across two states, with zero downtime to the organisation.

"The solution provided by Fenwick Software is easy to use and implement, allowing for quick rollout to new sites," said Peter Robertson, Group Finance and Administration Manager, Alex Fraser Group.

The Success

Three months on, and Alex Fraser is starting to realise the benefits of the new system in line with expectations.

Customer service has improved, with weighbridge ticket errors being reduced by more than 75%. This simple improvement alone has allowed Alex Fraser to service is clients more quickly and accurately, increase business capacity, and reduce duplicated efforts in the Accounts Department.

The work environment has been simplified and there is less pressure on staff. Manual processes in the weighbridge have been reduced by at least 55%, and further improvements are likely as the system is optimised in use.

Instead of knowledge being held by a select group of individuals, information is now available for all team members to access for improved performance levels and greater staff support at peak times.

Data is now visible for improved inter-department communications, and management is equipped with real-time information for better decision making. Sales people have more reliable product information to keep customers informed, which has improved sales and shortened the sales cycle.

"Fenwick Software's ERP solution has impacted many facets of our business, from improved customer service to reduced operational costs," said Peter.

Going forward, Alex Fraser will look to Fenwick Software to assist in optimising the solution and for further enhancements. These will include the creation of intuitive user-interfaces with drag and drop functionality for the dispatch team; additional modules from enwis) with PDA integration to the trucks; further development of the BI data analysis solution; and caller ID functionality.

Discovery workshops conducted to establish business requirements.

Fenwick Software replaced existing systems with a central, integrated, cohesive ERP system.

Fenwick Software achieved zero downtime to the organisation.

Customer service errors have been reduced by more than 75%.

A greater work environment has been created.

Increased business capacity.

Manual processes in the weighbridge have been reduced by at least 55%.

Sales cycles have shortened.

Operational costs have been reduced.

Alex Fraser will look to Fenwick Software to help them optimise the solution to reach its full potential.