



PINNACLE

Computing Solutions

SAGE 200 CASE STUDY: ASE CORPORATE EYECARE

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Business Partner



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ASE CORPORATE EYECARE CAN FOCUS ON THE FUTURE WITH SAGE 200

■ CLIENT PROFILE

ASE Corporate Eyecare Ltd has been providing specialist corporate eyecare services to the public and private sectors since 1991. Its extensive client base currently includes organisations as diverse as Network Rail, the Department for Work and Pensions and Barclays Bank.

Through a consultative approach and tailored employee EyecarePlans, ASE helps clients to achieve compliance with EC legislation around eyecare for VDU users (users of monitors and screens), drivers and wearers of prescription safety spectacles. Many clients enhance provision with additional benefits beyond the basic legal entitlement.

A unique web-based portal helps to deliver consistent, quality service wherever clients' employees are based. It supplies all the information they need to understand and apply for their EyecarePlan, the entitlement voucher which they can use across a nationwide network of 2,200 affiliated opticians; that's a third of all UK optical practices.

■ THE CHALLENGE

As the business grew over the years, concerns arose about the scalability and security of the accounting software then in place. From the company's head office in Robertsbridge, East Sussex, Financial Director Jane Kent explains,

"We purchased our original accounting software when the business was much smaller. We'd stretched it beyond what could be reasonably expected and it no longer offered the flexibility we required."

ASE works hard to minimise the administrative load on its clients. Fees are predetermined and are, therefore, predictable for budgeting purposes. Simple rolling monthly invoices make it easy for them to track their spending.

Behind the scenes, the ASE team handles all the complexity of caring for the eyesight of 500,000 employees a year and promptly raising around 1,500 supplier payments every month. They process thousands of individual line transactions and issue payment cheques for a wide range of amounts; often as little as a single eye test.

ASE has a bespoke billing application which calculates invoice costs to clients. Previously, the information held on this system was laboriously re-entered into the company's accountancy software to generate sales invoices. This manual process created substantial duplication of effort and was also prone to error.

Jane continues, "We planned to upgrade our accountancy software and at the same time re-build the interface to our billing application. The objective was to simplify and streamline the monthly transfer of supplier and client invoicing data into our accounts system."

This level of change represented a major technology milestone for the business:

"We knew a leap of this nature was a one-time move and we would have to live with the consequences of our decision for a long time," says Jane.

■ THE SOLUTION

In December 2007, the search began for a new solution to support ASE's business ambitions. After a careful review of the market, the company selected Sage 200 as a well established software solution that would not only meet its immediate requirements but would cope with future business expansion.

The company would also need expert hardware and software support from a technology partner who understood the pressures on the business. ASE chose Pinnacle Computing as the Sage Business Partner who would install and support the solution.

The project went smoothly and came in on time. All in all, the implementation took just over six working days from start to finish. This timeframe included installing the software, testing and training. Pinnacle Computing also wrote a special module for the business to export data from the billing application and import it seamlessly into Sage 200.

Jane recalls feeling some natural apprehension as the go-live day approached:

"Clearly, we'd outgrown our previous accountancy software. However, I was very comfortable with its workings and the business had developed alongside it over many years. So, while some users were thrilled to be moving to a larger system from a market leader, to me it seemed quite a daunting prospect."

Fortunately, the installation was followed by several days' training, phased over two sessions, so that Jane and her staff could put the theory into practice and return with any queries on how best to use the new system to carry out specific tasks. "The training was excellent," says Jane, "and, over the months, using Sage 200 has become second nature."

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*Jane Kent, Financial Director,
ASE Corporate Eyecare Ltd*

■ THE BENEFITS

The arrival of Sage 200 has greatly improved efficiency within the business. Rather than manually re-entering data, all EyecarePlans are now quickly and efficiently scanned and read into the bespoke billing application. The data is then pulled across into Sage 200 to generate sales invoices automatically. This has increased productivity and released time for higher value work. Accuracy has improved too, which has the knock-on benefit of reducing customer queries.

"We used to collect – and then duplicate – spiralling volumes of data, which was very inefficient and timeconsuming," comments Jane. "Single data entry has removed a whole layer of effort."

Through a wealth of management reports, Sage 200 also helps ASE to maintain a firm grip on its cash flow. This is vital in today's challenging economic climate, as Jane explains,

"Over the past two decades, we've seen our market constantly evolve, with increasing legislative pressures around health and safety, expanding usage of computer screens, and wider recognition of the importance of employee eyecare. At the same time, client decisions are very influenced by the budget they have available. We are heavily dependent on the IT systems in which we have invested to run an efficient business, one that can adapt rapidly to our clients' changing needs."

Jane sums up the difference Sage 200 has made: "In giving us the reassurance of an industry-standard, dependable system, Sage 200 lets us concentrate on our business. We now have a powerful, flexible system that will stand the test of time, firmly embedded within the business. Through Sage 200, we've been able to create a business 'template', a platform on which to move forwards efficiently without significantly increasing our manpower overheads."

Jane has also been consistently impressed by the quality of support provided by Pinnacle Computing:

"We're about to close our first financial year with Sage 200, and Pinnacle have built a lot of trust with us over the past twelve months. They always answer our queries promptly and professionally. We've learnt not to panic, as the Pinnacle team have seen it all before! I love the way we simply log a call and then they dial in, take control of our system and solve a problem right before our eyes. The back-up they provide to our business is invaluable."

■ THE FUTURE

The ASE telesales team has been using ACT! Sage's best-selling contact manager for about a year and, in doing so, has built up reserves of client knowledge. To capitalise on this information, there are plans to move to a more comprehensive customer relationship management system in Sage 200 CRM. This will help to create a 360 degree view of all customer activity and interaction.

The company's sales and marketing teams will have access to this single, integrated view. It will also give ASE greater power to slice and dice their customer and supplier information in different ways and generate progress reports to gain an accurate picture of the sales pipeline.

Jane concludes, "We're confident that we can look to Sage 200 to help us maintain control of the business today, with the agility to move forward into the future."

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■ SOLUTION OVERVIEW:

- ▣ A flexible accounting solution for a growing business
- ▣ Finance team supported in increasing efficiency and productivity
- ▣ Improved management information and control
- ▣ Seamless integration between bespoke software and Sage 200
- ▣ Opportunity to extend functionality with customer relationship management
- ▣ Professional training and support from Sage Business Partner Pinnacle Computing

■ ABOUT PINNACLE

Pinnacle Computing is a Sage business partner providing the full range of Sage Accounting, ERP & CRM solutions. Pinnacle Computing is based throughout the UK & Ireland with offices in Belfast, Dublin, Glasgow, Hull, Maidstone, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Warrington and Worcester. Sage is a global provider of end-to-end business management applications for mid-sized businesses. Look to Sage for fully integrated software that delivers high performance, advanced functionality, cross-product integration and unmatched freedom of choice. Integrating powerful front-office web and wireless capabilities with back-office accounting and operations. Sage provides companies with the solutions they need to enhance competitive advantage and increase profitability.

Talk to us!

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