



PINNACLE

Computing Solutions

SAGE LINE 500 CASE STUDY: QUALCERAM SHIRES PLC

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Business Partner



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QUALCERAM SHIRES EXPERIENCES THE BENEFITS OF GROUP-WIDE INTEGRATION WITH SAGE LINE 500.

■ CLIENT PROFILE

Qualceram Shires plc is an ambitious, expanding company focused on the manufacture, sale and distribution of a broad range of bathroom products. With a head office in Arklow, County Wicklow, the business operates across Ireland and the UK.

Established in 1988, the company has grown organically and through acquisitions. Turnover has increased from € 21, 000, 000 to € 100,000,000 since the turn of the century and it now employs some 300 people.

■ THE CHALLENGE

Several factors compelled Qualceram Shires to reassess its choice of IT platform. The very fact of rapid growth meant the company needed greater support to retain tight management control. In addition, acquired companies came with their own IT systems, potentially leading to fragmentation and difficulty in consolidating group-wide information.

Specifically, in 2000 the business had acquired Shires, one of the foremost brands in the UK bathroom products industry. Prior to the acquisition, Shires used a UNIX-based system which lacked both a reporting facility and a central data store, and needed the support of a large IT team.

Qualceram Shires decided to replace its ageing Tetra 2000 system and amalgamate disparate IT systems from four different vendors across the business. The goal was to create a single integrated system which could be rolled out group-wide, with a central store of data easily accessible to users.

The company has a long-term Sage Business Partner in Pinnacle Computing, which offers extensive Sage product knowledge and experience, and a geographic presence matching Qualceram Shires' own.

■ THE SOLUTION

Sage Line 500 was chosen as the corporate solution, with a Microsoft SQL database as advised by Pinnacle. Implementation took place as Ireland entered the Euro zone, which brought increased pressure to move ahead swiftly. Despite this and some very specific business requirements, the project went well, due to Pinnacle's tried and tested methodology.

Trevor notes, "Had we stayed with the old system then in place on the Shires side of the business, it would have cost us dearly to make the software Euro-compliant, whereas Pinnacle were able to complete the conversion of the Sage system in a couple of days. Another advantage is that with Sage the door is open to a world of third-party software applications. Pinnacle was able to meet our precise needs in different areas, for example, building a whole quotation module using software from De Facto Software."

Pinnacle migrated data from Shires' previous manufacturing and order processing system directly into Sage Line 500. "It all went much faster than we ever expected," says Trevor.

“ IN CHOOSING A TECHNOLOGY WITH A FUTURE, SAGE WAS THE OBVIOUS PLACE TO LOOK. ”

*Trevor Broughal, Group IT Manager,
Qualceram Shires*

■ THE BENEFITS

Today, the Sage Line 500 solution caters for the company's specific manufacturing processes, from initial entry quotations through to order taking, which includes consolidation of purchase orders, right through to the eventual dispatch of the product.

Sage Line 500 has brought a breadth and depth of functionality and flexibility, as well as integrating and streamlining disparate systems. Trevor explains, "Rather than needing a server on every single site and a multitude of applications to administer, we have a single, integrated system which is much simpler to manage and therefore, requires less IT resource."

The move has improved life for users too, giving them ready access to essential business information. Instead of reports and quotations being produced on individual spreadsheets, all data is available to management and key staff throughout the group.

The move away from UNIX-based system in the Shires part of the business means senior managers can, if they wish, design and create their own Crystal reports, rather than having to log a request with IT.

Trevor provides strong evidence of the increase in efficiency: "Our senior managers are the experts on their business area and with Sage Line 500 we've been able to equip them with the tools to do their jobs. To take case in point, a month-end report which could take two days to produce under the old Shires system now takes two hours. We have some very satisfied users! They can interrogate the SQL database to generate the specific information they need to make key management decisions, and quickly drill down to the detail, for example to look at sales of a specific product."

Once a report is ready, Trevor can make it available to the rest of the business in a matter of minutes, further increasing efficiency by eliminating duplication of effort.

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*Trevor Broughal, Group IT Manager,
Qualceram Shires*

Aidan Clince, Managing Director, Shires Ireland Limited, praises the ability of Sage Line 500 to analyse information at different levels within the business, "It's of significant benefit to us. The more information we have, the more proactive we can be and the more control we gain."

Through Citrix access software, 150 users across the company have secure and cost-effective on-demand access to critical business applications and information held on the Sage system. In addition, all sales representatives can enter their data after customer visits onto the Sage Line 500 system over the web.

Aidan finds this combination of Sage and Citrix a great advantage when travelling around the group. I can easily hot-desk no matter where I am, in Ireland or the UK, and have full access to everything I need to do within Sage Line 500, over a web interface. To give another, everyday example, at a meeting yesterday, one of our financial controllers from the UK was required to approve some purchase requisitions. He could do that on the spot from our offices here in Dublin. It's all very seamless."

Sage Line 500 also gives managers more control over their teams' activities. Its Business Alerts feature will, for example, prevent orders being placed for customer accounts currently on stop, and will trigger an alert if a system key is abused. Meanwhile, the GUI Forms Editor means screens can be tailored to equip sales representatives with just the information they need and sets mandatory fields for completing customer orders.

■ THE FUTURE

With the possibility of further business growth through new acquisitions, Qualceram Shires has in Sage Line 500 a system which will meet its current needs and will continue to support the business into the future. Looking back on his twelve years as a Sage user, Aidan says, "In inheriting a number of systems through acquisition, we decided to stay with Sage as a platform for growth. This decision has been supported by the commitment to continuous development we've experienced. It's system with longevity, with every new version bringing fresh enhancements and adding even more value to the business."

The business has benefited greatly from the use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and is now working with Pinnacle to provide a 'one-stop shop' to handle efficiently the growing numbers of customers, especially in the UK, who wish to communicate electronically.

Qualceram Shires and Pinnacle continue to meet regularly and Trevor describes the relationship as very close, "We keep them in the picture on our business and they are very proactive in suggesting new developments to support our goals. They've become our long-term partner and together with our Sage Line 500 system, add real value to our business, recommending best practice where appropriate. It almost goes without saying that day-to-day support is excellent, too. Product and support work remarkably well together. Why would we look elsewhere?"

■ SOLUTION OVERVIEW:

- ▶ A single, integrated group-wide solution.
- ▶ A centralised store of data, eliminating information silos and reducing administration.
- ▶ Fast access to management information for greater control.
- ▶ Flexibility to accommodate future requirements as the business grows.
- ▶ Strong support from long-term Sage Business Partner Pinnacle Computing.

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*Aidan Clince, Managing Director,
Shires Ireland Ltd*

■ 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.

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