



AT A GLANCE



Successful integration helps seed company growth

AS KINGS SEEDS' BUSINESS HAS BLOSSOMED, A FIT-FOR-PURPOSE INTEGRATION FROM FLOW SOFTWARE HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME.

Kings Seeds is a mail order seed company based in Katikati, in the Bay of Plenty, supplying a range of customers from large commercial operations providing salad greens to supermarkets right through to home gardeners just wanting to try a new variety of heirloom seed.

The company prides itself on its extensive selection of almost 1000 varieties of seeds, meaning it can offer its customers everything from the "weird and wonderful" through to old favourites, along with a range of organically certified seeds, and seeds for sprouting.

The business has recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary, having been established in Auckland by Ross and Glenys King in 1978.

Barbara and Gerard Martin bought Kings Seeds in 1999, relocating it to Katikati.

The business - along with its product range - has grown strongly over the past 21 years since the Martins took over. The company now employs 10 staff and regularly ships more than 1000 orders a week to customers around New Zealand and the world.

The Situation

Barbara Martin says when she and Gerard took over in 1999, Kings was an entirely manual business with no technology being used.

The couple knew they needed to automate their systems if they were to thrive, but took their time learning the business before deciding what IT solutions to put in place.

"We didn't leap into it. We sat back and found our way before we started contemplating technology. We didn't even do email for about 5 years, until 2004."

That was the year Kings Seeds got its first website - along with email - enabling it to begin taking orders online.

Then in 2008, with the importance of online sales growing, the company migrated to a new, more functional, e-commerce site from web design firm Zeald. At about the same time they began using Infusion Professional as their integrated business management software solution.

The adoption of the new technology presented a challenge: how to integrate the company's Microsoft Access customer database with the orders being processed on the website, along with the accounting functions in Infusion.

"When we considered how we would link invoices, orders, customer records, et cetera, we realised it would be a nightmare if we had to import them manually," Barbara says.

The company turned to Flow Software to solve the problem.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Flow Software has enabled us to simplify our systems for working with both commercial customers who pay on invoice and home gardener customers who pay on the website - both functions are coordinated with Infusion



The Solution

Flow Software was used to facilitate the integration between Microsoft Access and the new Zeald website. The solution enabled the business to transfer orders from the Zeald e-commerce platform to Infusion, and at the same time transfer customer information to the company's Access database.

It automated the uploading of customer data from Access to the website, and vice versa, as well as automating the generation of a file to be imported into Infusion. Those processes allowed data to be taken directly from the source, reducing time spent re-entering data. This meant staff time was freed up so they could work on other areas of the business. It also significantly improved data integrity. Barbara says the solution also dealt with a growing need the company had to process orders differently depending on whether they were from its more traditional retail customer base or its growing number of commercial customers who were invoiced at month's-end rather than being charged online at the time of purchase.

"We had a growing commercial part of our operation, along with the home gardener side of the operation, which was also steadily increasing, and we came up with two separate processes using the same website, and using the same accounting package," she says.

"Home gardeners go into the website, create and pay for their order. Flow Software creates the pathway for the consolidated transaction report to come from the website into Infusion. That's what happens daily and it's worked seamlessly almost every day for 10 years.

Meanwhile, commercial customers on monthly invoice terms also place their orders on the website, creating a purchase order within Zeald.

"We import those orders into Infusion, we process the packing slips, process the orders, and they go into the system, with an invoice generated to their account, and a statement sent out once a month," Barbara says.

The Results

Rather than facing the nightmare scenario she feared 10 years ago - of having to individually reconcile up to 1000 or more transactions a week - Barbara says the automation enabled by the Flow Software solution has worked perfectly almost every day for the past decade.

"Every day I receive a sales report by email. I match it up with the report that's imported into Infusion, and I balance it against our bank records," she says.

"Instead of having to do a reconciliation one transaction at a time, I can do it as a total. I have a report that shows I have a certain transaction total from Zeald; I have a total in the bank and I have a total imported into Infusion. I can tick them all off, and that's it done for the day - very quick and very straight forward," she says.

"Flow Software has enabled us to simplify our systems for working with both commercial customers who pay on invoice and home gardener customers who pay on the website - both functions are coordinated with Infusion."

Barbara has been delighted with the ongoing service and support Kings Seeds have received from Flow Software - through an annual licensing arrangement - since the solution was implemented back in 2008.

"I've found it very easy to work with Flow Software. Whenever I've had an issue I've let them know and they've fixed it really quickly," she says.

"When we've had a situation that had something to do with our server they've gone to our technical people, who look after that side of things, and solved any problems working directly with them."

With the solution implemented by Flow Software still meeting Kings Seeds' needs a decade down the track - despite the company's turnover and order volume having grown significantly over that time - Barbara remains a very happy client.

For more information about Flow Integration & EDI Solutions

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Published December 2017