



SAP IMPROVES STOCK CONTROL AT AUSTRALIAN SIGN SUPPLIES

They adorn shops, offices and public buildings everywhere. Advertising goods or providing directions, signs are a part of the streetscape of every city and town in the country.

From glowing billboards to small street names, creating signs keeps thousands of people busy every day. Ensuring those people have the materials needed for the task is the job of Australian Sign Supplies.

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With 20 employees, the company operates from a headquarters in Brisbane and warehouses in Sydney and the Gold Coast, serving more than 1000 clients up and down the east coast of Australia.

Company managing director Greg Nicholls said his firm used a combination of 1300 number telephone and fax services, a fully interactive web site and online ordering system, and on-the-road sales staff to look after its customer base.

"We supply more than 2500 different items which we source from suppliers both in Australia and overseas," he said. "Keeping track of supply and demand and optimizing our product mix is a big job."

About 12 months ago the company faced a new challenge. With customer numbers and order volumes growing strongly, its core software package was beginning to show signs of being overwhelmed.

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The company was also trying to encourage more of its customers to place orders via its web site, to improve efficiency and speed of delivery. To do this it needed core software that could tightly integrate the process from order to fulfilment.

"We have a very complex item numbering system for our stock," he said. "If people are able to select exactly the products they need from the web site it reduces errors and improves efficiencies. Our existing software could not really help us with this."

Faced with these challenges, the company began the search for a new core software suite. Following a review of a number of offerings on the market, Australian Sign Supplies decided to implement SAP Business One, signing an agreement in November 2003.

"We were looking for a software company with which we could have a long-term relationship," said Mr Nicholls. "The financial steadiness of SAP, together with the amount they continue to invest in product enhancement appealed to us."

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**Greg Nicholls, Managing Director,
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As the first Australian site to implement SAP Business One, the company realised it was taking a big step, but the functionality of the software and the level of integration it could provide made the choice straightforward.

"Because we were such an early adopter, naturally there were some teething problems but we worked with SAP and our technology partner REALTECH to sort them out," he said. "I have to say we were very impressed with their support which went above and beyond what you would normally expect. We are now well on our way to maximising the powerful functionality the software offers."

The biggest initial advantage the new software brought to the company was the ability to monitor and manage stock levels in multiple warehouses. This was important because operations often included supplying clients from more than one warehouse and transferring stock between them.

"Previously we were just barely managing to do it, said Mr Nicholls. "For every one line item of stock, we had to duplicate it to show which warehouse it was in. A lot of this process was achieved by exporting data into Excel spreadsheets and then manipulating it to produce the reports that we needed."

Now, reports can be produced at the touch of a button, based on the very latest stock information drawn from each warehouse.

"We can also have multiple views of the business generated quickly and easily," he said. "I can look at sales to particular customers over multiple warehouses or do profit and loss statements by warehouse. This is much better visibility of the financial aspects of the company than we have ever had before."

In the future, Australian Sign Supplies is examining the potential of equipping its sales staff with wireless-enabled PDAs. Linked directly into the SAP system, these will give accurate, real-time views of stock levels and allow immediate order placement.

"We've now got the platform we need to continue to grow our company into the future," Mr Nicholls said.

AT A GLANCE

SAP Solution	SAP Business One
Key Business Driver	Rapid growth - existing software no longer meeting requirements
Industry	Distribution
Project Length	30 days
Implementation Partner	REALTECH
Number of Employees	20

