



Fleming gets lucky third time round with Greentree ERP

The plastics company maybe small but it's a big supplier to the industry, so it needed an ERP system that punched above its weight but was the right fit too...

More than most, Tim Fleming, managing director of Fleming Plastics Dynamics Pty Ltd, understands the disruption that an enterprise resource planning (ERP) deployment can cause business. After all, he's been through the process three times in the past 15 years. Two of the deployments ended disastrously. So, it's a testament to his doggedness and strength of vision that Fleming Plastics has now been operating successfully with a Greentree ERP solution for the last 12 months.

Fleming is a small, highly specialised company that provides ancillary equipment for the Australian and New Zealand plastics industry. Although it has a staff of just 10, it is nevertheless a major supplier to the industry. Sourcing materials from around the world, it supplies, as

well as services, products for some of Australasia's leading manufacturers. The company is justly proud of the fact that many of its client relationships go back 10 years or more.

A false start

In the early 1990s, the company wanted to upgrade from a PASTEL accounting package to a full-blown ERP solution. "What we had was a basic system that involved a lot of double-handling across the company. There was no flow-through of events and no relationship between sales, purchase or supply orders so data was always being re-entered. It was a very inefficient way of doing things," says Fleming.

"The idea of investing in an ERP system was pos-

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*Tim Fleming
managing director*

sibly harder for us to justify than for a larger company, but our processes are complicated and we believed in the benefits that an integrated solution could bring,” Fleming explains.

The company deployed a large second-tier ERP system, but the move was not a success.

“We were naïve and put in a system designed for a much larger company. It was the wrong choice,” Fleming admits. “We found ourselves paying extremely high maintenance fees without getting the right level of support and, within a year, we’d thrown the system out.”

Feeling burned, the company went back to using PASTEL. And, despite the problems, it continued to do so for another eight years.

The second attempt at an ERP system looked good on paper but unknown to Fleming it was supplied by a vendor in financial trouble. “Implementation was supposed to go for eight weeks. In week three we realised that the project was going poorly. The product was not delivering as promised and our customisations weren’t happening. The project manager was young and inexperienced, with no accounting or business background. It was an absolute disaster,” says Fleming.

Three weeks before the go-live date, Fleming called a halt to the project. The company reverted to PASTEL, and the ERP software vendor ultimately went under.

Perseverance

However, Fleming was determined not to give up and within a year was again searching for the right ERP system. “We were hesitant, but by this time we were also quite experienced in preparing documentation, so we wrote down a very detailed check-list and tender process.”

After looking around again at what was available, he arrived at a short-list of three: SAP; Navision; and Greentree. Somewhat understandably, Fleming wanted a supplier with strong financial backing; one that was professional, responsive and where the relationship felt right.

When it came to software, key considerations included comprehensive foreign exchange and other financial management capabilities; service and support management; the ability to automate and manage the sales process from beginning to end; and integrated customer relationship management (CRM) software. In addition, with over 10,000 line items in stock, strong inventory management was essential.

Fleming says, “Of all the demonstrations we saw, Greentree and its partner Star Business Solutions’ demo were the most professional. Star ran through the A-to-Z

of what the software could do, and everything they showed us was completely customised to our business. We felt it was a true representation of the product. The other thing was that all of Star’s staff seem to have business accounting knowledge. They talked the same kind of language as our accountants and bookkeepers.”

A reference check firmed up Fleming’s choice and, in early 2008, Fleming committed to a Greentree ERP deployment, selecting the Greentree financials, fixed assets, distribution, workflow, manufacturing, CRM, sales, service and support, asset management and supply chain management suites.

Having been down this path before, the company had already spent six months preparing its inventory, accounts and customer databases, so they would be in a suitable format for Star to import into the new Greentree system.

This time, everything went to schedule. “The data was transferred with no major hiccups. Training was clear and adequate. It all followed a detailed timeline. And it worked,” says Fleming.

Daily FX information

More than a year later, Fleming remains delighted with the results. “It’s a massive improvement. As an importer, one of our biggest issues is the need to quote based on the daily exchange rate, and then to carry that rate and quote through the sales cycle. Now everything is integrated, so the sales process starts with an enquiry, and all the information automatically flows through all the way to delivery.”

Significant efficiencies have been achieved across the business, to the extent that when two staff departed during the year, they were not replaced. “We’re working differently and saving a huge amount of time,” says Fleming.

Another benefit has been the establishment of an online connection between Sydney and Melbourne. Prior to deployment, communication between the two offices relied on the phone. Now Melbourne has full online access to the same systems and data as Sydney.

Confidence in the system continues to grow, and Fleming is looking at using Greentree software to establish an online catalogue and e-business capabilities. He’s also interested in remote PDA technologies.

“Getting an ERP system that works has been a long, drawn-out process for us, but we’ve finally made it. After all the heartache and pain, we feel that we’ve made the right decision and the company has benefited immensely,” says Fleming. 



CASE STUDY

> Fleming Plastics Dynamics Pty Ltd



AT A GLANCE

Industry

> Plastics manufacturing and equipment

Business Objective

> As a small company which nevertheless has complicated processes, Fleming Plastics needed an integrated solution – and a stable, reliable one. It had already been through two failed ERP deployments.

Solution

> Greentree ERP system, deployed by Star Business Solutions

Business Benefits

> Automated flow of data throughout the sales process, from quote through to delivery
> Enhanced foreign exchange calculations
> Strong inventory management.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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