



Case study: Macmillan Distribution (MDL)

The background

Macmillan Distribution (MDL) is the distribution arm of Macmillan Publishers Ltd. A global operation founded in 1843, the company is today involved in publishing online resources and e-books as well as printed material. Using modern methods of production and distribution MDL, as well as serving the distribution needs of the publishers within the Macmillan group, also works for 40+ other companies, providing a fully integrated warehousing, customer service and credit control service.

The challenge

Despite operating a number of sophisticated and integrated systems to control its core processes, MDL like many businesses had over time become reliant on a number of 'Ad Hoc' administrative tasks and procedures within areas ancillary to the main business. Typically these were managed by individuals using desktop applications such as MS Excel and Outlook. As the business had grown the risk and reliance on these systems had increased and it became clear that a software solution was required flexible enough to be adapted to a number of processes and able to provide control and security to the tasks in hand, as well as improved efficiency.

The search

MDL's assigned project team first produced a functional specification detailing precisely which processes it intended to migrate to the new system and detailing interaction between key business areas. They then went to the market to see what 'off the shelf' solutions were available for process scheduling and management and as a part of this process, invited Express Systems to demonstrate the functions and capability of Synergist.

"The Synergist system immediately stood out from the crowd" said Pat Tobin, MDL's Quality Systems & Development Manager. "MDL's specification was far reaching, but, a thorough and honest appraisal for suitability by Express Systems Jay Neale, Business Development Manager identified that we could meet 90% of our targets and rightly won over the project team."



The Synergist solution

Phase one of the project went live across all three MDL sites on 1st June 2008 with extremely pleasing results. Task creation was simplified, quote accuracy improved and true costs for time and materials routinely logged. In addition, the management and tracking of task status was clearer than was ever possible under the previous manual systems.

“Synergist has not only provided us with an effective tool for task management, it has also assisted greatly in challenging the logic of the processes on which we are trying to focus. The software is extremely well balanced, allowing the right level of configuration for our business, but at the same time ensuring a logical path for each task from start to finish” said Matthew Hogg, Head of Client Services and Project Sponsor.

As well as proving popular at MDL, Pat commented that the Synergist system has been received very enthusiastically by publishers. “They can see exactly what they are being charged for with the clarity that Synergist provides.”

MDL has found the service from Express Systems to be “First Class”. From pre-project evaluation, system configuration through to post go live helpdesk queries, the level of support is excellent, often receiving an instant response to queries.

MDL’s use of Synergist and the relationship with Express Systems is still in the early stages, but very much off to the right start. To date the system has achieved all that was expected of it and whilst tangible benefits are still being assessed, there is little doubt that these will be delivered to the business. MDL look forward to working with Jay and his team further and sharing our experiences with the rest of the Synergist community.