

PASTEL evolution

ACCOUNTING

Success Story



Pastel Evolution delivers true business value to Smile Education Systems

Founded in 1979 Smile Education Systems is a South African manufacturing, marketing and distribution concern selling educational children's toys. Part of its manufacturing business now includes converting recycled paper and cardboard into puzzles and games, with the company now being the largest jigsaw puzzle developer in Africa. It is also initiating an export programme to sell more products throughout Africa and the rest of the world.

"I would have no hesitation in recommending Pastel Evolution to other small and medium-sized companies, Pastel Evolution has a lot to offer and will meet most of the needs of these companies right out of the box."

Les Johnston
Managing Director,
Smile Education Systems

SOLUTION

Having successfully used its own custom-developed financial and business management applications in the past, the company decided it needed to upgrade to a more powerful system to be able to effectively meet its future growth needs. Smile therefore migrated its proprietary financial applications onto the Pastel Evolution framework. **In addition to the accounting functionality of Pastel Evolution, Smile has also installed Resolve, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module designed to help users better manage their businesses and their customer interactions.**

A long-term user of information technology as the foundation of its business processes, Smile's director, Les Johnston, says the decision to move to Pastel Evolution was

based on in-depth research conducted into available products that could meet the company's unique needs. In comparison to other options, Pastel Evolution proved the best combination of flexibility, functionality, power and price.

"The requirements of small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) have in many instances expanded beyond the need for just an accounting system to the need for a holistic business software solution," says Steven Cohen, MD of Softline Pastel. "Pastel Evolution breaks the traditional paradigm of accounting software and delivers a robust and flexible framework that addresses relevant and practical business pressures. The solution is scalable to businesses of varying size – from small and medium through to larger organisations."



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SOLUTION CONT.

UNIQUE INTERNET COMMERCE

"Smile conducts as much as 70% of its business over the Internet, using a variety of tools we have developed over the years specifically for this purpose," Johnston adds. "Pastel Evolution has neatly slotted into our business processes and taken over some of the functions of the proprietary systems we build."

To allow customers and consultants to place orders online with ease, Smile has developed a Windows 32-bit application they install on their PCs or laptops. When the client logs onto the Internet, the application synchronises with Smile's stocking system and updates the application's listing of stock availability and prices.

Once synchronised, the customer can place an order while not online. When he/she connects again, the order is sent via the Internet to Smile, where it is verified. A response is then sent to the customer with the details of the transaction – all this without human intervention.

"This process involves about five different platforms, including Pastel Evolution, and can provide a definitive answer to customers in less than five minutes," explains Johnston.

EASE OF USE WITH POWER

Although the company is still ramping up its use of Pastel Evolution, Johnston notes that one of the outstanding features of the system is its ease-of-use and intuitive interface that makes migrating users to the platform simple. The migration has been painless for clients, with no noticeable

changes to invoices or picking slips.

Smile currently has 15 users on Pastel Evolution, but soon expects to make full use of the 25-user license it purchased as the company grows and makes more use of the system.

"And the fact that Pastel Evolution is built with Microsoft's SQL Server as its database is another strength, as SQL provides us with tremendous power and usability," he says. Johnston has found that the power of SQL makes creating reports and handling the company's 33 000 transactions per month easy and reliable. SQL ensures that data is kept safe and is better at preventing corruption than previous systems the company has used.

"The system is also very flexible, allowing us to run it the way our business works instead of having to change the business to suite the software." Johnston adds that the system runs well on PCs running Windows 98, even though Pastel advises against this. He suggests other Pastel Evolution users ensure the PC systems they select are well supplied with memory to guarantee the solution runs efficiently.

The overall process of installing and configuring Pastel Evolution has been a great benefit to the company, with Johnston praising the system's ability to deliver powerful tools under a flexible, simple user interface. He says the friendliness of the system has users experimenting and coming up with new functionality almost on a daily basis.

"We are now using the General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable, Order Procurement and Invoicing Modules of the accounting package," Johnston says. "We are also using some of the CRM functionality of Pastel Evolution, which is proving a very powerful customer and business management tool, but have not yet implemented the full solution and reaped all the benefits it offers."

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