

Business In A Box

From Sales Lead to Support Contract

NewSpec employs 12 staff throughout Australia to provide sales and service of scientific equipment to universities, the CSIRO, government and private customers.

Sometimes you don't know what you are missing until it actually arrives.

After 15 years working in the distribution of scientific research equipment, Graeme Jones' career took a brief but fortuitous detour into the software industry. It was here he encountered versaSRS, a case management tool developed by VersaDev. And the one thought that Graeme said replayed in his mind as he delved more into the software was "this would've been perfect for what I was doing at my previous two companies."

So when Graeme returned to scientific distribution to found his own company, NewSpec, he said, "getting our instance of versaSRS going was one of the first things we did as a company in 2004." Now, nearly 15 years later, the software solution continues to support the business in everything that they do.

"Having worked with versaSRS, the way it flows so well, I've always thought that it is great for anyone who's customer base is on email. And if you do anything sales or service oriented, versaSRS is fantastic."

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But perhaps the most interesting facet of the way in which NewSpec apply versaSRS to their business model is in the sheer breadth of it. The sales process is managed using four separate queues, beginning with the initial enquiry for a grant application or a sales quote through to the order and the final account. Every customer interaction relates to an ongoing ticket number which is assigned to the relevant queue. Crucially, tickets can be linked together so that there is a flow from the first interaction to the last.

Two additional queues relate to scheduled and non-scheduled servicing of equipment. Every piece of equipment sold is entered into the asset database in versaSRS and linked to the tickets in the sales and service queues. This enables them to track the entire history of each product. "It's easy for us to go and look at the details of every system that we have out there in the country."

"We have lasers that we sold 13 years ago and I can go and look at the complete service history and accounts history of that laser just through the history of the tickets. And importantly, so can anyone else. It doesn't matter who set up the ticket or who did the service job, any of us can go and have a look at it. And that becomes really useful because if something goes wrong, you need to be able to go back through historical records to confirm exactly which actions were taken when."

versaSRS contains a billing function which NewSpec use to record orders and cost of goods to calculate their gross profit. "That feeds into all the reports and the forecasts which is what I use. The accounting that comes out of MYOB tells you what you did, but what matters more in the day to day running of the business is what is coming.....and that we get from the SRS sales reports."

In addition to financial data, the staff also store articles and technical information within versaSRS as a knowledge base. This takes the pressure off existing staff to have to rely on remembering developments and updates but also makes it easier for any new staff to get up the curve.

Every action performed in versaSRS is audit logged, which for NewSpec, is one of the most significant enhancements to their process. Their application of it is so comprehensive it takes on many of the roles usually performed by an ERP. Having integrated versaSRS with their intranet means their end-to-end process is streamlined and enables them to maintain an efficient quality system. Graeme Jones' praise for the product is high indeed. "To me it's the most reliable piece of software we've ever used. It pretty much runs our business and never breaks. That lets us concentrate on what we should be doing. Which was the idea of it. I knew it suited us."

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Yet despite this simpatico relationship, Graeme says there is still pressure to synchronise with other players in the market. "We have been in meetings with suppliers in the US and other places where they've said 'you must use Salesforce or NetSuite'" But the argument never quite stacks up.

"If I think about the staff who came from other places, those are the people who really understand how good this is. Because we all used to have to double up data entry or this system didn't link to that system, all those kinds of things. I think the guys that had work history on other set ups and the way companies work, really appreciate what we've managed to set this up to do. Which the software allows us to do."

"I do sometimes think it's one of the smartest things we did."

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