

Software for the Agile Business.



Microsoft Business Solutions'– Solomon edition wises up SMS

A leading technology and management services provider that advises some of Australia's top companies has put the broom through its own accounting system and upgraded to Microsoft Business Solutions – Solomon Edition.

SMS Consulting Group Limited (SMS), a member of the SMS Management and Technology group of companies, has implemented the customised software system to better manage its financial systems, increasing data integrity and facilitating more accurate forecasting.

These are crucial advantages for a company dealing mainly with the top 200 organisations in Australia.

In 1998, at the time the company was planning to obtain listing status, it became apparent that its accounting systems were totally inadequate.

Many processes were manual including the weekly timesheets submitted by consultants billing on client sites, and in some instances, data was being keyed in multiple times.

Fiona Norton, SMS's Business Systems Manager, said: "There was just no way the company could have proceeded with a listing based on the systems we had."

SMS instigated an exhaustive survey of its system's inadequacies, and prioritised its business solution requirements.

Several systems were evaluated with Microsoft Business Solutions' Solomon, (supplied through Melbourne-based Renown Data Systems), selected.

"We wanted a solution that could generate management records and financial reports as well as use our timesheets to drive both revenue and costs," Ms Norton said.

"Solomon was selected principally because of its open architecture which allows SMS to customise it without trading off the system's ability to upgrade.

"In addition, its full integration of the timesheet module and project modules into the financial suite as well as the project control and time-keeping modules made it very attractive."

"...we now finalise our monthly revenues in three working days. Prior to the Solomon implementation, this same process could take up to three weeks."

Fiona Norton,
Business Systems Manager,
SMS

Organisation

SMS Consulting Group Limited (SMS)

Industry

Information Technology

Business Scenario Summary

SMS Management and Technology's core business is the provision of management and technology services, particularly Information and Communications Technology (ICT) managed services across a wide range of professions and industries including banking, government, telecommunications, utilities and major corporates. SMS has four Australian offices in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, three offices in the UK and three offices in Asia.

In 1998, SMS were looking at becoming a public company with plans for later listing, and subsequently needed a more advanced accounting system.

SMS appointed Melissa Seto, an experienced SMS consultant, to manage the Solomon implementation.

A six-month extensive staff consultation process paved the way for Solomon's successful "go live" date, achieved three months earlier than planned in October 1999.

"The biggest issue with the implementation was cultural, not the chosen product," Ms Seto said.

"For example, SMS had a half-monthly timesheet cycle. With Solomon, this was modified to a weekly cycle that led to timelier reporting and a more even cash flow.

"Any software customisations were resolved quickly by Renown Data Systems, ensuring a minimum disruption to the business."

All of Solomon's standard financial modules including General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Receivable and Cash Management were implemented along with Time and Expense for Projects modules for billing, invoicing and contract management.

SMS's customisations on the standard Solomon billing and invoicing format allow them to invoice on a daily basis, a crucial factor in the company's business processes.

Screens were also customised to contain codes for particular business forms that, according to Ms Norton, facilitated the cross-checking of customer and contract information and ensured data integrity.

"It helps to remove human error so we are looking at cleaner data," Ms Norton said.

SMS is now able to extract pertinent financial information that is used for management reporting and profitability analysis on a timelier basis.

This means the company has the ability to analyse closely what is happening with the business.

It can examine a profitability analysis by consultant, by project, by customer, by industry sector or by the type of work SMS has completed.

Ms Norton: "It means that, for example, the CEO can know who our top 20 customers are and make appropriate decisions about account management and the allocation of company resources.

"All SMS's customer information is on one database which means that there is no need to import and export information."

Since implementing Solomon, SMS has seen a huge boost in staff morale, which Ms Norton attributes to the improved process of generating invoices and significantly reduced reporting times.

"After undertaking training programs with the staff who were used to manual systems, we are now able to generate large volumes of monthly invoices in draft format in just two hours," she said.

"After management review and approve the drafts, we now finalise our

Business Solution Summary

Implemented Microsoft Business Solutions Sobmon.

Project covered 65 workstations across the following functional areas:

- General Ledger
- Accounts Payable and Receivable
- Cash Management
- Project Controller
- Timekeeper
- Timekeeper Extend

Partner Details

Renown Data Systems

monthly revenues in three working days.

“Prior to the Solomon implementation, this same process could take up to three weeks.”

In the future, SMS is proposing to roll out Web Timesheets and Web Project Analyser as well as utilising Microsoft Business Solutions, Microsoft Project 2002 Server and new customer relationship management application, Microsoft CRM. Microsoft CRM will be launched in the second half of 2003 and assessment will start after this time.

“We have a number of disparate contact management systems so we would like to get the information in one place,” Ms Norton said.

Managing Director of Renown Data Systems, Colin Walker, said Renown worked closely with SMS to ensure Solomon was delivered in the best possible way.

“We have an internal software development team who write customisation and integration programs in-house,” Mr Walker said.

“Our consultants worked tirelessly throughout the project to ensure that the system was being developed according to specification as well as on time and within budget.

“In partnership with SMS, we were involved in all aspects of business and system design, development, implementation and training.”

Flemming Beisner, Managing Director of Microsoft Business Solutions Australasia, said SMS would continue to reap the benefits of a cost-effective solution specifically designed for their needs.

“Solomon is ideal for companies requiring one integrated business solution that is easy to customise, simple to use and able to provide accurate reports on company data and support the management decision-making processes,” he said.

About Renown Data Systems

Renown Data Systems provides total business solutions, including the development, supply and service of a range of computerised accounting products including Microsoft Business Solutions Solomon Edition.

Founded in 1989, Renown Data Systems has sold and registered hundreds of accounting software products and serviced over 100 client sites in more than 40 different industries Australia-wide.

Renown Data Systems was recently awarded the inaugural Microsoft Business Solutions Eagle Award for their exemplary service to customers and the Microsoft Business Solutions reseller community.

About Microsoft Business Solutions in Australasia

Microsoft Business Solutions, a division of Microsoft, offers a wide range of integrated, end-to-end business applications and services designed to help small, mid-market and corporate businesses become more connected with customers, employees, partners and suppliers.

Benefits

- Customised billing and invoicing
- Improved data integrity
- Close analysis of business information
- Significantly reduced reporting times

Microsoft Technology

- SQL Database

Distributed via Citrix Metaframe

Microsoft Business Solutions' applications optimise strategic business processes across financial management, analytics, human resources management, project management, customer relationship management, field service management, supply chain management, e-commerce, manufacturing and retail management. The applications are designed to provide insight to help customers achieve business success. More information about Microsoft Business Solutions can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/businesssolutions/>.

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