

Evans Success Story

Evans Petroleum streamlines with Sage Accpac.



Having experienced a couple of major computer crashes in the past, Evans Petroleum Managing Director Stuart Evans liked the idea of a professionally managed, continually backed-up off-site system. The distribution company needed security against two of the fuel industry's greatest risks – burglary and fire. If anything were to happen at the Evans Petroleum offices, a cloud solution would ensure that no information was lost.

But the main driver for the company's decision to change was growth. For more than 40 years Evans Petroleum has been supplying wholesale and retail fuel to the residents and businesses of Gippsland, Victoria. The company has established a steady market among the region's farms, transport, construction and marine industries. It distributes fuel to several service stations across the state and operates 11 of its own retail fuel and convenience outlets. The company boasts a fleet of 12 fuel tankers, employs more than 100 staff and according to Evans, it's a business that is always looking to expand and improve on customer service.

Time to rationalise systems

Evans Petroleum had previously invested in a locally developed petroleum industry software package to help run the wholesale arm of the business. Over the years, as the business grew additional software packages were purchased, including a wages application for staff and point of sale (POS) software to manage transactions within the service stations. By 2008 however, the reliance on multiple applications and an inability to easily share information from different parts of the business was becoming a concern.

"Our scale had grown," says Stuart. "When we first put the software, in our business would have been one tenth the size it is now. We didn't have a retail arm. "We got to the stage where we needed more from all of our software, so for some time I'd been thinking about rationalising everything into one system". Although Stuart had looked at a few software alternatives he wasn't in any hurry to move. He realised that any change to the systems could also bring upheaval. Therefore, he was content to wait and continue looking around until the right solution turned up.

But in 2009, a fellow petroleum distributor recommended Sage ERP Accpac, an integrated business software solution designed to help manage all aspects of a business – from accounting and finance, to customer and supplier relationships, human resources and payroll. It also offered a specially developed fuel distribution software application containing much of the industry-specific functionality that Evans would need including forecasting, reporting, replenishment, inventory control, logistics, and advanced pricing and discounting capabilities. The only thing missing was POS functionality but after investigating further Stuart discovered that his POS software could be integrated with Sage ERP Accpac, thus giving him the single solution he was after.

Keeping it in the clouds

Sage Accpac business partner Pacific Technology Solutions (PTS), a developer of the fuel distribution application recommended the fully managed "cloud" solution. After considering the ageing hardware and limited IT expertise and resources available within Evans Petroleum, PTS suggested software installed and maintained within a secure data centre that would connect to Evans Petroleum offices using a dedicated wide area network (WAN) link.

"I suppose Accpac was more of a complete package than what we'd had before," Stuart says. "It had the flexibility we were after and the pricing was good. Hosting meant that we didn't have to buy our own computers to run it on and

that was a positive. “When you buy a computer, it’s always out of date the next day. This way it’s something we don’t have to worry about.”

Getting it up and running

It took almost four months to get the new Sage ERP Accpac system up and running. Historical information had to be prepared and loaded onto the system, new work flows and processes built and reports had to be created. There was also a period of nearly two months during which the company’s old software and Sage ERP Accpac ran in parallel. This gave everyone a chance to double check that the system had been set up correctly and that all data was being processed correctly.

“It was a lot of work for our staff but it paid off,” Evans acknowledges. “When we did go live we could basically count the number of issues we had on one hand. It was very well done.”

Overall Improvements

Today around a dozen Evans Petroleum office staff work with Sage ERP Accpac daily. “It’s been a huge change for everyone but although there was a little more effort required during data input the result is life is much easier,” Evans says. “We’re getting a lot more information than we ever had before. Accuracy at month end has improved and we’re printing statements on the second or third working day of the month. “We weren’t particularly slow before, but with Sage ERP Accpac it is definitely quicker. Our external auditors are very happy. In their reporting they feel it was a lot more secure and a positive to go with this system,” he adds.

The choice of a cloud solution has made IT support much easier for the rural-based company. “In the country it can be a problem getting people out to see you if you have a crash but the number of hardware problems that we experience are negligible now,” Evans says. “And if we have a problem with the software, PTS staff can log in and shadow us. They identify the problem and it’s fixed.

“It was a big change of culture to go from a system that we were used to and to change the way we do things,” Evans adds. “But the results are there and we’re more than happy. We’re expecting to get a long run out of Sage ERP Accpac.”