CASE STUDY

CLIENT:	Taskmaster Hardware
INDUSTRY:	Import Wholesale and Distribution
LOCATION:	Australia
PRODUCT SUITE:	EXO Business and EXO Payroll
MYOB ENTERPRISE PARTNER:	Kilimanjaro Consulting

With less than a month to launch, hardware wholesaler Taskmaster needed a safe pair of hands for its new ERP system.

Overview

Established in 1985, Taskmaster Hardware is a longstanding Australian-owned national distributor of gardening, home and trade hardware.

Over the course of its history, it's gone from providing products and services to independent retail nurseries, hardware stores, mower shops and rural stores, to supplying the likes of Bunnings, Mitre 10, Combined Rural Services and many more.

In 2011, the Taskmaster business was acquired. Under new ownership a key priority was to review IT and ERP systems.

Weighing up the risks

Prior to the divestment, Taskmaster were using a Unix-based system which, on review, just didn't provide the flexibility, support or ease of use that a growing business needed.

"We considered carrying on with it," says Managing Director Jonathan Seddon, "and in many respects, sticking with what we knew was the lowest risk choice. But it was expensive to maintain and not particularly user-friendly, at least compared with more modern interfaces.

"There were systems out there better aligned with our business requirements."

The key criteria

According to Seddon, they needed something that would:

> be scalable
> be intuitive and user friendly
> meet operational requirements
> be cost effective
> have a significant installed user base, and be widely supported by a good number of alternative consulting businesses.

It would need to be installed quickly too.

Alongside their main ERP system, Taskmaster was using a standalone payroll system – which, according to Seddon, was very good.

"It was discrete," he says, "and the process for monthly based, 'pay as you use' cash flow was very appealing.

So one option was to implement the full suite by that provider.

"Out of a shortlist of three or four, this alternative came very close," says Seddon, "but to my mind, it didn't quite meet all our key criteria."

Only MYOB EXO ticked all of the boxes.

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No time for due diligence

Taskmaster contacted MYOB, who recommended they speak with implementation partner Kilimanjaro.

"From the word go, we felt confident," says Seddon.

"Even though most of the early discussions were done via Webex demonstrations, we were struck by Kilimanjaro's professionalism – and the quality and structure of their implementation process.

"The one thing I didn't have, was time for was a long due diligence process," adds the Taskmaster MD.

"Getting to the bottom of our requirements had to be done quickly and the implementation even quicker still."

It was Kilimanjaro's ability to rise to that challenge that sealed the deal for EXO.

A phased approach to launch

With such tight timeframes, Kilimanjaro suggested a phased approach. The initial foundation work would be done quickly – based on lessons learned from similar installations. Phase two, integrating a web based B2B ordering system, would start once Taskmaster had settled in the new system.

"From the signing of the contract to our first day of trading, Kilimanjaro had less than a month to get EXO up and running," says Seddon – "and they pulled it off! We traded on the first day without any problems or complaints from customers."

Ronnie Baskind, Managing Director at Kilimanjaro, credits this lightning-like turnaround to the dedication of the Taskmaster team as much as his own, but admits that it couldn't have been done without Kilimanjaro's large pool of specialised consultants to choose from.

"We were able to assign specialists for the various phases of the implementation. The documentation and design phase workshops were done by a team with analytical skills. Our trainers helped train the new users in classroom style lessons. While our go-live support team experts were onsite at Taskmaster for go-live.

Keeping tweaks to a minimum

Because this was such a rapid deployment, Kilimanjaro took care to limit the amount of custom configuration in phase one. Certain menus were simplified, while others were standardised across the business.

"Some reports needed a little work, mainly around the categorisation of customers and products. But for launch at least, changes were kept to a minimum," says Seddon.

Bringing on EXO Payroll as well

Based on the success of the base installation, Taskmaster decided to drop the existing standalone payroll module and bring in EXO Payroll in time for their first payroll run.

"Having witnessed what Kilimanjaro could do, it made sense to have one integrated system," says Seddon – "so we could see what was going on right across the business".

And that's exactly what EXO has enabled Taskmaster to do.

EXO was installed on a remote hosted 'cloud server', giving Taskmaster rapid access not just from the main head office but remote locations too.

"I travel quite a bit," says Seddon, "and with the management analytics module, I can see at any moment in time, anywhere in the world what our latest revenues are. I can see margins, I can see customers, I can see orders – in fact, I can see everything in real time.

"To my mind that's a real plus point."

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Well suited to the wholesale model

Another feature that's gone down well with Taskmaster is EXO's flexibility. When asked whether he felt the system would be able to grow with the business, Seddon said:

"Absolutely. A key criteria in acquiring EXO was its scalability, and from what I can see, it'll easily take 100-plus users."

EXO's stock management capabilities – warehousing and distribution, inventory control and kitting for example – also make it well suited to Taskmaster's wholesale business model.

Because the company sources products from overseas and distributes them here in Australia, there are landed costs and multiple currencies to calculate.

"In EXO, you can easily apportion costs to different items," says Seddon, "and that's very powerful. At the moment, we haven't created export orders in currencies other than Australian dollars, but it's good to know that capability is there for us when we need it."

Easy to use for everyone

Until then, Seddon is just pleased that everyone finds EXO easy to use, whether they're on the warehousing, purchasing, administration or sales order entry side of things.

"In terms of quick wins, a simple thing like having sequential picking in the warehouse has improved our efficiencies significantly," says the MD.

"But overall, it's the reports I get back from staff telling me how much of an improvement EXO is that I find most positive. They really endorse my decision to choose the system in the first place."