

CASE STUDY

CLIENT:	Southern Clams
INDUSTRY:	Exporting Industry
LOCATION:	New Zealand
PRODUCT SUITE:	EXO Business
MYOB ENTERPRISE PARTNER:	Focus

Live clam exporter finds a way to eliminate costly errors and boost staff profitability.

Overview

Southern Clams is a New Zealand fishery business that has been exporting live clams to local and international customers for the best part of 27 years.

The business has two offices on the South Island. Until recently, much of the data transfer between the two had been manual. This was slowing back office functions and introducing errors with potentially costly consequences.

Done waiting

For the past six or seven years, Southern Clams had been using MYOB Premier in their Dunedin office to manage their accounting and finances. Robust and easy to use, it was a good system according to General Manager, Bruce Inglis.

“But once the business started to grow and we added multiple users, it’s fair to say things slowed down considerably”, Inglis recalls.

Additional user capability was not the only new requirement. The Christchurch office was using an entirely different accounting system all together.

“We really wanted to get everybody on the same platform,” says Inglis. “And with our multiple locations, Premier wasn’t going to let us do that”.

That’s when Southern Clams started looking at alternatives.

Focus on customisation

There were three contenders, but in the end it came down to a decision between MYOB EXO Business and Microsoft’s Great Plains.

“What swung it for EXO Business,” says Inglis, “wasn’t price or features. We wanted to be able to customise our solution and felt we’d be able to do that best with the MYOB system.”

Southern Clams also wanted the support of a local company and were impressed with Focus Technology Group, an MYOB implementation partner based in Invercargill.

“When it came to quality of service and products, Focus ticked all the boxes,” says Inglis.

“From the word go, they seemed to know what they were talking about. They explained the different modules in detail and let us trial EXO Business using our own data.

“Really, as soon as they’d reassured us that there wouldn’t be any speed or connection issues, we were ready to proceed.”

The software fitting the business

Southern Clams wanted to make several tweaks to the system - mainly to tailor it more precisely to their business model.

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Because they're in the live clam business, they ship out a lot of couriered packages domestically. To save time, Southern Clams wanted to export package information and labels direct to the couriers' systems.

Another requirement was to populate export certificates.

Until EXO Business, Southern Clams had been manually entering export information into a separate system. This wasn't just time consuming – it was error prone. "For a big exporter like us, that was a risk," explains Inglis.

"It only takes a small error (like the wrong harvest data) to be entered onto an export certificate for an entire shipment to be rejected. When your primary market is many thousands of miles away like ours is, the shipping is a hell of a cost. Worse still, with a live cargo, the product can't be returned. It simply goes to waste."

Having sales data fed automatically from EXO Business would effectively eliminate this risk.

Further tweaks

Inglis says Focus has responded well to these new requests.

"They're really easy to talk to and they stick to our briefs, which isn't something that can be said for all software developers. As soon as work is complete on the export certificate, we'll be asking them to start work on a third phase of customisation - invoices."

Because of the nature of Southern Clams' product, supermarkets in New Zealand make as many as three orders a week. At the moment, paper invoices are raised for each – which is a huge time waster.

"We plan to have EXO Business configured in such a way that customers receive invoices via EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) automatically, without any manual input from us whatsoever," says Inglis.

Growth without staff increases

Even without the customisation, Southern Clams has already noticed a marked reduction in the number of hours spent rekeying information.

"It's hard to believe," says Inglis, "but we used to print out information in our Christchurch office and mail it to Dunedin – only for it to be entered again a couple of days later by hand. Now, with EXO Business, data entered in Christchurch is instantly visible on the system in Dunedin – and vice versa.

"It's a fantastic time saver for us," he says, adding; "In fact I'd go so far as to say that in terms of effort, EXO Business has probably saved us the equivalent of half a person in the Christchurch office".

The story's even better in Dunedin.

"We've managed to boost sales significantly without increasing staff numbers there at all," says Inglis.

Anywhere reporting

Asked which reports the business looks at most often, Inglis concedes they probably don't use EXO Business's reporting functionality half as much as they could.

"I tend to dip into sales reports or P/L most days, just to keep an eye on what's going on. The beauty of EXO Business is that I can do that from home in the North Island just as easily as I can in either of the two offices."

Software that knows its place

Summing up EXO Business, Inglis is quick to point out what makes it so suitable for an export business like Southern Clams.

"Accuracy," he says. "It's a big deal for exporters. That, and being able to customise the system to suit your own particular way of working.

"At the end of the day, though," he concludes, "the best thing about EXO Business is that it just works. We can turn up to work and get on with what we need to do without worrying about our back office. That's how it should be with all good software."



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