UK 3D Printer Specialist Additive-X Transforms Business with Acumatica

ADDITIVE X

OVERVIEW

Executives at Additive-X, which serviced 2-D printers for more than 30 years in the UK, predicted the decline of its main business and began offering 3-D printers and services, a move accelerated by the Pandemic. As part of its transformation, it replaced its legacy hardware and financial software with Acumatica Distribution Edition. With Acumatica's flexible, open business management solution, Additive-X streamlined workflows, improved data access, connected its Magento eCommerce platform, and reduced costs.

KEY RESULTS

- Consolidated disparate legacy processes into a single, connected business management solution for finance, manufacturing, inventory, and field services, becoming more efficient
- Established built-in multi-company and multi-currency functionality, accelerating transactions
- Optimized inventory levels throughout global supply chain challenges while maintaining superior customer satisfaction
- Eliminated spreadsheets with dashboards providing real-time data and streamlined financial operations
- Avoided hiring four data entry experts, automating bank reconciliations, price list updates, currency updates, and Brexit customs forms
- Eliminated duplicate order entry by connecting its Magento online storefront
- Shaved 25 percent from annual audit prep time, reducing frustration and stress

CHALLENGES

For 30 years, Additive-X (previously Express Group Ltd.) repaired printers and provided replacement parts for HP, OKI, Brother, Lexmark, and others. With more than 35,000 printer parts in inventory the company still supports printer repair in the UK and across Europe while also holding inventory on behalf of specific manufacturers, providing logistical support for their warranty repairs.

For a number of years, the demand for printer repair and replacement parts has declined as printers have become cheaper to buy and companies around the globe have embraced email and sharing documents online. Additive-X executives anticipated the decline and pivoted their business to focus on 3-D printers and additive manufacturing services. The pandemic accelerated Additive-X's transition.

"Everyone began working from home and office printing died another death; businesses stopped printing documents," says Jo Young, Managing Director. "The transition to the paperless office accelerated during Covid."

Legacy Software on Legacy Hardware

Additive-X used a legacy UNIX system called One Office for its finance, sales order processing, purchase orders, inventory, returns, and repairs. To make its internal processes work, they used a separate CRM and many spreadsheets, Young said. "Our main problem was we were running legacy software on old hardware."

When Additive-X's lone IT hardware technician left, the company outsourced IT support, but the firm couldn't help with the aging server and legacy infrastructure. "When the server went down it was unbelievably scary," Young says. "It took more than a day to get it back up. I felt like we had a ticking time bomb. I knew the risks of moving to a new ERP but felt we had an even bigger risk if the whole thing went down, and we could be utterly stuck."

Manually entering data into the legacy software was a big headache, she says. New printer products and price updates had to be entered manually one at a time. The legacy software was not integrated with any web store, and it had a web portal that was "horrible to work with."

No Online Store Integration

When they needed parts to repair printers, employees had to manually enter orders. The finance team wasn't happy; mainly because getting data out of the legacy software and into Excel wasn't easy. Much of their time was wasted manually creating spreadsheets or hand typing online orders into the legacy financial system.

"We had massive operational challenges and needed to transform faster to focus more on the 3D side of the business," Young says. "We started shopping for a new ERP, then Covid hit."

Young focused on a few ERP options researching key features and reading user reviews. She met with her IT company and shared her top requirements. The new ERP had to handle multiple companies and multiple currencies, and those that didn't were immediately excluded.

"I wanted a modern business application that was cloud-based because I was running a server here and VPN tunnels to offices in Belgium and France, and we had lots of problems with connectivity," Young says.

"I knew SAP was a great tool but ridiculously expensive," she adds. "I looked at Sage because our finance employee mentioned it received best-in-class marks for accounting, but I was skeptical as to whether it would fit the rest of the business."

Company

Additive-X
www.additive-x.com

Industry

Distribution: 3D Additive Printing and Service

Number of Employees

Approx. 40 full time employees

Location

Headquarters: Ripon, UK with offices in France and Belgium

Products

Acumatica Distribution Edition with:

- Advanced Financial Management (GL, AR, AP, Banking, Tax, Multi-Currency, Multi-Tenant, Multi-Company)
- Distribution Management with SOP, POP, Inventory & Order
- WMS (Pick-Pack-Ship, with PC)
- Device Hub
- Ship Theory

Customer Social Sharing Details

https://www.linkedin.com/company/additive-x

https://www.facebook.com/AdditiveXltd

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7FQRaDoCIOrWOBICzNOWyA

https://www.instagram.com/additivexltd

https://twitter.com/Additive_Xltd

Partner Details

ARCUS

Arcus Universe
www.arcus-universe.com

ADDITIVE X

SOLUTION

Flexible and Future-Proof

Acumatica made the list and was recommended by her IT company. It also received high marks from existing customers, Young says. Getting data in and out of the cloud ERP application was easy. Further, the business management solution and native manufacturing suite were future-proof and easy to use. Lastly, she had several local partners to choose from, selecting Acumatica Gold-Certified UK-based partner Arcus Universe.

"One of the bigger items that cemented our choice on Acumatica was integration with Ship Theory, providing our team with multiple carrier options," Young says. "In addition, we felt like the robust inventory management and advanced supply chain functionality were very strong."

BENEFITS

Single, Centralized Platform

Acumatica centralized Additive-X's transactions and workflows into a single business management solution eliminating the company's reliance on spreadsheets. Acumatica Manufacturing Edition significantly improved daily operations with integrated workflows providing executives with a powerful forecasting tool, improved data access, and new ways to reduce costs.

Acumatica's open API strategy facilitates third-party application connectivity, making it easy for Arcus Universe to link Ship Theory with the core business system. "The quickest win was the Ship Theory integration," says Young. "From day one, we started printing labels so no one had to key in addresses. That saved time right away. Then we were able to automatically handle customs invoices when Brexit requirements were implemented."

Acumatica's intuitive user interface allowed employees to be more efficient with less training, Young says. "They find customer information, invoices, payment history, and other data instantly without hunting through several programs and spending a lot of time searching. Now they can easily drill down to find more information when needed," she says. Acumatica's dashboards are easily configurable to individual roles with KPI preferences and real-time, actionable information.

Automated Workflows Save Time

Acumatica offers automated workflows for bank statement reconciliation, native document storage for customer warranty attachments, and seamless printing for labels and customs paperwork. Young estimates these features will offset the equivalent of four team members, including one in the company's warehouse operations.

Digital document storage and outsourced backups by Arcus Universe eliminated manual filing and physical storage costs and time for as many as 18 bankers' boxes of documents annually. "We're virtually paperless."

The ability to add notes to invoices and other paperwork "was massive, Young says. "I can't tell you how excited my staff is about the notes they can put in the system everywhere. They can put notes on products, customers, and transactions and everyone can see them. We no longer have to figure out why something hasn't shipped because we can put a note on it, and everyone knows what's happening."

Overall, she estimates the finance team has seen a 10 to 15 percent increase in productivity due to Acumatica's automation. Additive-X also shaved some 25 percent of the time it previously took to prepare for an audit because the information is housed in one single solution, and they no longer spend time importing and exporting information.

Going through an audit is also easier because "The auditors have access to the system and can do the research they need on their own rather than handing us a long list of the data they need," she adds. "They can simply access Acumatica and drill down right within the system to see the document or file they need."

Improved Inventory Management

Acumatica Distribution Edition improved Additive-X's inventory management giving the company instant transparency. When an outsider approached the business about renting warehouse space, for example, Young was able to instantly pull an aged stock report of parts aged 40 months or more, find the stock location, talked to the warehouse manager, and authorized him to clear it to make room for the potential tenant – all within a few minutes. "I then created the inventory issue, did an adjustment of 3,300 parts, cleared it, scrapped it, released it, and it was done," she says.

Previously that task would have taken several days and a lot of manual work.

"Acumatica is also very good for maintaining replenishment levels. New reorder levels are uploaded automatically, and we are reviewing them more frequently than ever before," Young says. "There's much less devaluation of stock because we're adjusting buying profiles in real-time, so we don't get stuck with items leftover, eliminating waste."

When a supplier sent notice that they were closing a warehouse for the holidays, Additive-X quickly "examined inventory levels, pulled account history, estimated needs, created a purchase order, and within an hour had the right stock on order in time to meet crucial deadlines," Young says. The business agility that Acumatica provides also helped them optimize inventory levels even during global supply chain challenges.

Improved Customer Service

Acumatica Cloud ERP helped Additive-X improve customer service with fewer stock-outs and significantly improved order fill rates, which helped elevate the company's brand name and customer loyalty.

"I can now say yes to things that customers ask for related to their unique business," Young says. "I can quickly find the information they want right from within Acumatica or reach out to our excellent partner resource in Arcus Universe to fulfill the requests if it's something I can't find on my own."

"I used to cringe when the old system went down," she adds. "It felt so unprofessional. Now we are projecting a much better image to our clients. We've linked to our Magento web store which automatically feeds orders to Acumatica, streamlining the customer's order process and order fulfillment."

Employees spend more time catering to customer needs thanks to workflow automation and self-service options in Acumatica. The customer refreshes reports themselves rather than waiting for a scheduled report, which they had to do previously. "We are quick to answer questions because we get timely and accurate information faster than ever before," Young says.

Improved data accuracy and speed provide Additive-X with a competitive edge with customers and suppliers.

Boosted Staff Engagement

Acumatica's easy-to-use and intuitive user interface coupled with improved data transparency have increased staff engagement. Employees now understand how their jobs fit and interconnect with the entire process, from selling a 3-D printer to manufacturing and fulfilling the order through to customer service after-sale support. "We're now able to have people work in multiple areas, sometimes in the warehouse, others in finance because Acumatica is so familiar to all our staff," Young explained.

In the past, everyone was siloed and kept in the dark about what other departments did. "People have grown in their roles since we've moved forward with Acumatica," she says. "Acumatica is future-proof, and the system is reliable, so people have confidence in it, which is important."

Easily Expand into the Future

Additive-X plans to add Acumatica's CRM, Field Service, and other modules and create advanced workflows in the future. "We can grow with the solution by continually implementing existing features and utilizing new system enhancements," Young says. "I'll be surprised if there ever comes a time in 5 to 10 years where I will say, 'Oh gosh, Acumatica can't do that.'"

Additive-X has "just scratched the surface with Acumatica," Young says. "I know if we want to expand with more warehouses, I can easily do it; if we want to expand to new countries, I can do it easily with Acumatica."

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