

Case Study

Acumen Corporation implement OpenAccounts at Susquehanna-Pfaltzgraff Co (SPC)

Client: Susquehanna-Pfaltzgraff Co.

Sector: Manufacturing

Project: Implementation of a new finance and accounting package

While SPC is a highly diverse organization shoppers in the United States and Canada will no doubt immediately recognize the Pfaltzgraff name from the displays of their first class products in malls and specialty stores. Pfaltzgraff is not only the oldest part of Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff, it is the oldest pottery manufacturing company in the U.S. With a strong emphasis on design, quality and customer service, Pfaltzgraff is a leading American manufacturer of ceramic dinnerware and related tabletop products.

In addition to the Pfaltzgraff manufacturing operation, Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff Co includes Susquehanna Radio Corp, one of the ten largest radio broadcasting companies in the United States, Susquehanna Communications, which owns and operates cable television systems in five states; and BlazeNet, a York-based Internet Service Provider. A highly diverse environment to be sure but one that is managed with a commitment to stockholder value, employee development and community involvement.

One of the key decision makers at SPC is Mr. Eric Linde, Vice President and Corporate Controller. What follows is an interview with Mr. Linde held at his offices at his SPC headquarters in York.

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- Eric Linde
Vice President and Corporate Controller SP

ACUMEN: Ultimately, from a product standpoint, what caused you to select OpenAccounts?

Mr. Linde: It was clear to us that OpenAccounts was designed for the needs of mid to large sized enterprises. Certainly it offers the robust functionality and scalability needed in companies like ours, but we were also taken by a user interface that I would call elegantly simple. In other words, Advanced Business Solutions obviously put a great deal of thought into design and navigation from a users perspective. The screens are not overly busy, the processes are logically grouped and clear. We were also drawn to the architecture chosen for the product. Progress is a robust and low maintenance relational database. One of our criteria for selection was that we could avoid hiring a database administrator. Progress gave us that freedom. We also think that the way Advanced Business Solutions uses the Progress environment adds to its long- term viability as an application. In other words, they reach down into the Progress tool set and use it to its fullest extent.

ACUMEN: Anything else?

When we began looking for a solution we wanted to be certain that the developer we selected had a strategy to utilize the web. It became clear to us that Advanced Business Solutions had thought that through, they had a Web strategy and target release dates. That was another indication that we could rely on the application for a five to seven year timeframe.

ACUMEN: What one thing would you point to as a differentiator in the OpenAccounts product?

Mr. Linde: The coding structure offered by OpenAccounts easily accommodates our diversity, from the least to the most complex of our reporting needs.

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One of the items most appealing to us is the flexibility that they have built into the product with the cost and expense code structures. Susquehanna is about to implement a reporting company that will gather all of the general ledger accounts from all of its corporate entities into one corporate tax and accounting datamart. One of the greatest challenges behind corporate accounting at Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff is to integrate financial information received from a number of different accounting systems that are used by their different corporate entities. These entities are diverse since Susquehanna Pfaltzgraff's subsidiaries operate numerous radio stations, manufactures earthen dinnerware and operates a direct marketing business. The flexibility of the OpenAccounts cost and expense code structure will allow SPC to import all of the accounts from each division. By utilizing the cost and expense code structure, SPC can import all of the general ledger account balances from each SPC division using that division's chart of accounts. Then, the accounting and tax staff can use the drill-down features in OpenAccounts to analyze each division's financial activity without having to migrate to that entity's accounting system.

ACUMEN: Would you recommend OpenAccounts to other companies?

Mr. Linde: Of course, particularly multi-faceted and diverse companies like ours. I would also recommend OpenAccounts if your enterprise system is relatively inflexible in the financial reporting area. The OpenLink toolkit (that allows for seamless integration to legacy systems) sets OpenAccounts apart as a viable best of breed solution, regardless of your industry. I would also have to say that, if you're using Microsoft Office tools, you'll absolutely love Executive Desktop Reporting (EDR). EDR's use of Excel is unique and very practical.

ACUMEN: Would you recommend that pre-sale engagement to others?

Mr. Linde: No doubt about it. We select a new system based 50% on product and 50% on a company's ability to properly implement the product. During the selection process we felt the people from ACUMEN really worked hard to understand our needs and recommend certain courses of action. We were impressed enough to actually engage them to help us work through some of our process issues even before we finally agreed to purchase OpenAccounts.

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Vice President and Corporate Controller SPC

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ACUMEN: Would you say that ACUMEN Corporation lived up to your expectations?

Mr. Linde: We were committed to making a good decision, and a pre-sale engagement allowed us to better evaluate the product in our circumstances and also evaluate the people who would help us install the product. That few days of working together solidified our feeling that ACUMEN could really make a difference for SPC during and after the implementation. By the time we began conference room pilots, the ACUMEN team already knew a great deal about the nuances of our business. So if you want the comfort of a working relationship even before you commit to the overall project, a pre-sale engagement is a cost effective way to get started.

ACUMEN: Were you happy with your project team?

Mr. Linde: Absolutely. They're all top professionals with certifications to prove it. Even now when we call ACUMEN to ask a question, it's as if the consultants are an extension of our team.

They give us an answer in SPC terms. And trust me, they know OpenAccounts inside and out. By the way, I've implemented several systems during my career. My experience tells me that many professional services firms are either great software implementers or great project managers. ACUMEN has the whole package.

About Business Solutions

Advanced Business Solutions, an Advanced Computer Software plc company, provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. It's award-winning software systems comprise core financial management, procurement, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions . It also provides managed and bureau service options.

Advanced Computer Software plc is the UK's leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and commercial sectors. It comprises 3 main divisions and has 7000 customers and 800 staff worldwide.

For more information

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