

## Case Study

# Bringing business and finance closer together at Ventura

**Client:** Ventura

**Sector:** Information Technology

**Project:** Improved customer intelligence delivered through better financial reporting.

**The sophisticated reporting capabilities of the OpenAccounts Extended Finance Solution are helping Ventura to take up-to-date financial information into account when making business decisions. Both business executives and financial staff are keen to make use of the new system, which unlike its predecessor is exceptionally user-friendly.**

Ventura is a leading UK-based provider of customer management outsourcing services. A subsidiary of Next plc, it delivers customer service on behalf of large corporate and public-sector organisations through teams of specialist staff working in multi-channel contact centres. Customers include O2, Wanadoo, Thames Water, Northern Rock, The Woolwich, the National Rail Enquiries Service, the Department of Work and Pensions, and the RSPCA.

In addition to six sites in the UK, Ventura recently opened its own contact centre in Pune, India. Altogether, the company has more than 9,000 employees.

The view that finance is the province of the accounts team alone is now well out of date. Everyone accepts that business executives need to understand the financial impact of the decisions they make, so the old barriers have to come down. A financial system such as OpenAccounts can play an important role in this process.

**- Robert Cumberbatch**  
Financial Systems Manager  
Ventura

### Dealing with change

Ventura is a fast-growing company operating in a market sector that is constantly evolving and changing. Its customers likewise tend to be agile, dynamic businesses that are rarely satisfied with the status quo for very long. As a result, Ventura's continued competitiveness depends on its ability to respond quickly and flexibly to their demands.

*"The ability to get hold of information quickly has become part of our recipe for success," explained Adam McGroarty, Client Profitability Manager. "This includes financial information, of course, so we are heavily dependent on our financial system. If a client comes to us with new deal structures, for example, we need to be able to cost and price them without delay."*

According to McGroarty, the need for better access to information was the main driving factor behind the recent replacement of Ventura's long-standing accounting system. This system had become inadequate in several respects, but reporting was a particular problem. Whenever financial performance needed to be broken down by client or by overhead area, for example, this set in train a cumbersome process. Indeed, so great were the difficulties that people turned to alternatives such as spreadsheets whenever they needed to analyse their financial data. This introduced new inefficiencies because the same data was being entered repeatedly.

*"We wanted a much more user-friendly system that provided us with the reports we needed whenever we needed them. We also wanted to make it much easier to capture information, with screen layouts and process flows that people did not have to struggle to understand," said McGroarty.*

After reviewing the market in detail, Ventura narrowed the field down to six potential suppliers, including Advanced Business Solutions Ltd, Oracle, Sage and Sun. When evaluating their systems, Ventura looked not only at user-friendliness and reporting capabilities but also at other factors such as price, functionality, level of integration among the different modules, and "out-of-the-box" suitability for its needs. It discovered that OpenAccounts provided the best fit to its requirements.

On top of that, the people who came to see us from Advanced Business Solutions really knew their stuff. If we asked a difficult question about product functionality, other companies' teams would usually go off and check, but Advanced Business Solutions would try it out on the spot.

- Adam McGroarty,  
Client Profitability Manager.

*"We liked the look-and-feel of OpenAccounts immediately: it seemed remarkably straightforward and easy to use," explained McGroarty.*

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### Exceptional skills

Ventura implemented the OpenAccounts Extended Finance Solution, including OpenAccounts Financials, Project Accounting and eProcurement, together with the OpenLogistix supply chain management solution from Advanced Business Solutions partner, Open Logistix Systems. It also became one of the first users of OpenAccounts OpenReporting, an out-of-the-box report writing solution for financial and non-financial managers. The OpenAccounts system runs on an IBM RS6000 platform with a Progress database. Currently the extended financial solution has 750 users, with more than 200 people making use of eprocurement functionality.

Ventura and Advanced Business Solutions worked together on the UK implementation, which took less than four months. Some customisation work was carried out to develop timesheets suitable for the specific needs of Ventura, whose business depends critically on the ability to apportion employees' time to different clients and bill accordingly. Advanced Business Solutions also provided training for end-users.

*"During the implementation, the Advanced Business Solutions team displayed exceptional project management skills. With such a short deadline to work to, we were far from confident that the go-live date could be met, but Advanced Business Solutions was able to invest the right resources in the project at the right time as well as responding very quickly when any issues arose," commented McGroarty.*

### Exceeding expectations

According to McGroarty, the OpenAccounts system has more than lived up to his company's expectations.

*"It does everything we wanted. Because it is so user-friendly, people are keen to use it. Everything is also much quicker, with processes running more smoothly and people working more efficiently. Most important of all is the ease with which we can now design and run reports."*

Robert Cumberbatch, Financial Systems Manager, agrees with the emphasis on reporting, claiming that Ventura makes extensive use of both standard and ad hoc reports.

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- Robert Cumberbatch  
Financial Systems Manager  
Ventura

*"With OpenAccounts' executive desktop reporting capabilities, it's possible to produce a suite of management accounts that are all available in one place without any need for consolidation. We are also able to add a list of email addresses to each predefined report, so that every time a report is run it's automatically sent to the people who need it. "As far as ad hoc reporting is concerned, a person can pull off practically any report they can think of. There's a huge amount of flexibility to combine different parameters in different ways, making for a very powerful business tool."*

Ventura has recently begun to offer self-service reporting capabilities, so that non-specialists can now run standard reports any time they want to. This is a far cry from the previous financial system, which was shunned by all but a few specialist users.

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In order to make the system even easier to use, Ventura is taking advantage of the browser-based features of OpenAccounts to provide users with Web-based access to the functionality they require. Workflow capabilities ensure that any data entered is then automatically put into the relevant ledgers, eliminating any need for repeated data entry. Ventura's Indian subsidiary relies entirely on Web-based access to interact with the financial system, thus removing the need to install modules locally. In Cumberbatch's view, this is the best approach where deployment at remote sites is concerned.

### Expanding the scope

Overall, Cumberbatch and McGroarty agree that the new financial system has made a substantial difference to Ventura's business. According to the former, one of the most significant changes is that non-financial users are more closely involved with financial aspects of the company.

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McGroarty, for his part, stresses the importance of rapid access to information in enabling Ventura to respond to new challenges.

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*"If you have the right financial information at your fingertips, you can maximise business opportunities and at the same time tackle problems at an early stage. If, for example, the profitability of a certain client is lower than it should be, you need to know about this as soon as possible so that you can take steps to rectify the situation."*

Future developments will help make OpenAccounts even more useful to Ventura. For example, more use will be made of e-BIS workflow to streamline processes such as approvals. Also, the functionality offered by the Project Accounting module will be used to keep a closer eye on billable expenditure for different projects, thus helping to maximise revenue streams. In planning to expand the scope of the system in this and other ways, Ventura receives regular support from Advanced Business Solutions in the form of briefings and seminars, where the roadmap for the ongoing development of the OpenAccounts product is described and discussed.

### 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. Its 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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