



Engineering Firm Boosts Productivity Management with Integrated System

Customer: TWP Projects
Web Site: www.twp.co.za
Number of Employees: 1,100
Country or Region: Republic of South Africa
Industry: Professional services—
Consulting engineering and related
services
Partner: IMMIX Solutions
Web Site: www.immix.co.za

Customer Profile

TWP Projects is a leading provider of engineering services to the mining industry in South Africa and a subsidiary of the publicly listed TWP Holdings Group.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics SL
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
 - Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2008
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Reporting Services

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www.microsoft.com/casestudies

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Christine Weldon, Head of Finance, TWP Projects

TWP Projects in South Africa needed a single integrated system for project management and accounting, including a tool to integrate employee timesheets with invoices. The company replaced its Softline Pastel and open-source systems with Microsoft Dynamics® SL business management software. Now, it has an integrated view of operations and revenue streams, which is boosting its ability to maximise profits and eliminating the risk of billing time incorrectly.

Business Needs

As a leading engineering company, TWP Projects—a wholly owned subsidiary of TWP Holdings Group, which is listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange—offers complete business solutions to the mining industry.

Until 2008, TWP Projects relied on disconnected systems to handle its project management and accounting needs. Approximately 700 employees work on a wide range of projects that require accurate accounting of time and expenses so that invoicing is correct for customers. By December 2007, the limitations of its existing business

processes were becoming clear. The open-source timesheet software was no longer fit for purpose, especially because the business had expanded by an estimated 60 per cent in just two years.

Christine Weldon, Head of Finance at TWP Projects, says: “Our previous systems were disjointed and limited. Significant manual intervention was needed to process and manage invoices, which were then manually captured into their previous accounting system. The additional functionality required by our existing product was not readily available when we needed it.”

At any one time, TWP Projects work on more than 100 different projects. One requirement for the business was to have all data in a central repository with a single point of entry and access. The company was also looking for a system with little requirement for customisation.

Weldon says: "We decided to look for a completely new tool to integrate our timesheet system with our financial system. At the same time, we wanted improved visibility over the business as a whole and to see both revenue and costs were being accrued accurately. Above all we needed to ensure that we were not losing money on projects because time had not been correctly entered onto the system or invoiced to the client."

Solution

Before making a final decision on its business management software, TWP Projects assessed Sage Pastel Evolution as well as the Compiere open-source product. Weldon and her colleagues decided in favour of Microsoft Dynamics SL because it offered a feature-rich system that would integrate easily with existing assets such as Microsoft® Project and Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007 collaboration technology, of which TWP Projects was an early adopter. Being well known worldwide, Microsoft products would be easily supported locally.

Working with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner IMMIX Solutions, TWP Projects went live with Microsoft Dynamics SL in the third quarter of 2008. The software helps project-driven organisations to automate and streamline processes and meet customer requirements. Subsequently, TWP Projects deployed

Microsoft Office Project Professional 2007, which helps project managers control the variables on any project.

Andre Pearce, Managing Director, IMMIX Solutions, says: "As a subsidiary of a company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, TWP Projects needed a reliable solution to ensure regulatory compliance and a full audit trail. Microsoft Dynamics SL has proved highly reliable, with no downtime experienced since deployment. We are now working on a maturity phase with plans to introduce more detailed reporting and analysis."

Other Microsoft products deployed at TWP Projects include the Windows Server® 2008 operating system, Microsoft SQL Server® 2008 Reporting Services, and the Microsoft Office Enterprise Project Management Solution.

Weldon says: "IMMIX Solutions was extremely helpful right from the analysis and proof-of-concept phases, through to final deployment. The company understands our specific needs and is working well with us to deliver solutions."

Benefits

TWP Projects is now confident that time billed by its staff is accurate. Senior managers have greater visibility over the business and the operational risks of billing time to customers incorrectly have been eliminated. Weldon says: "Everything we do for a customer is now stored in a single system. By having one repository for all this information in Microsoft Dynamics SL, we will be much more strategic in our approach and

maximise the profitability of each project."

- **Greater productivity as staff focus on higher value tasks.** With an improved workflow and no need for double entry of project information, TWP Projects has reduced staffing by one full-time equivalent and enabled other employees to spend more time on qualitative work.
- **Solution tracks revenue and costs as it accrues.** Senior managers can easily see revenue accruing even before invoicing, which helps them recognise emerging trends in the business.
- **Containing costs becomes easier.** The software automatically identifies any areas of the company's operations where costs are spiralling—ensuring that managers can intervene earlier than when reporting was largely manual.
- **Customer service benefits from better accounting.** TWP Projects customers now have far more accurate and transparent accounting of the time spent by staff on individual projects. Weldon says: "If queries arise, we can extract relevant information based on a number of dimensions and rapidly respond to our clients."
- **Smarter decision making by project managers.** By using the intuitive and comprehensive toolset in Microsoft Dynamics SL, project managers can quickly locate the information they need to make better decisions about current work.