

Dart Group



Dart Group hits the target with OpenAccounts

Aviation and distribution company saves time and increases efficiency by implementing a financial solution from Advanced.

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Manager - Special Projects >
Dart Group PLC

Dart Group PLC is a UK based aviation and distribution company with 1500 staff and an annual turnover of £228 million. The company that started life in 1971 as Carpenter's Air Services is now a specialist in three different areas.

Dart Group operates cargo and passenger aircraft on charter contracts and scheduled low cost services throughout Europe, via two of the Group's companies. Three companies within Dart Group, Channel Express (Channel Islands), Fowler Welch - Coolchain and Fowler Welch BV, distribute fresh produce, flowers and temperature controlled products throughout the UK. Benair Freight International, also part of Dart Group, is responsible for freight forwarding at London Heathrow, Newcastle, Manchester and East Midlands airports and from offices in the Far East.

Financial management chaos

Each subsidiary company within Dart Group had its own separate finance and accounting systems with no existing links between the different companies. Even though all subsidiary companies belonged to Dart Group, there was no commonality at all between the systems. The consolidation of all the financial data and financial processes was carried out by a central accounts team at head office who worked alongside the individual finance departments of each subsidiary company. Detailed financial reports and analysis had to be copied to a disk and sent to head office where the data was consolidated but this was very time consuming.

Dennis Billings, Manager - Special Projects at Dart Group comments: *"All financial and accounting reporting was sent to the central finance department but it was a struggle each month to consolidate all the information and data required for group reporting. It wasn't the most pro-active use of the finance department's time and we all knew that there must be a more efficient way for us to operate as a group."*

Commonality and flexibility

The decision was taken by Dart Group's Financial Director to find a system that would allow for commonality across all the different subsidiary companies within Dart Group. What was needed was a company-wide system for nominal ledger, payables, receivables, fixed assets, reporting and all core finance functions that was easy to use and that would simplify the monthly accounting process.

After researching the different solutions on offer, Dart Group chose a finance and accounting system from Advanced. The OpenAccounts software offered the required functionality, ease of use and was more than capable of providing the cross company reporting and financial analysis for management, which was needed to support the business. The OpenAccounts solution would deliver real benefits from process efficiencies and meet their budget.

The original implementation rolled out to 64 users across the subsidiary companies and to the centralised finance and accounting staff.

Dennis Billings comments: *"Everything about the implementation went very well indeed. We had an excellent project leader here at Dart Group as well as at Advanced Business Solutions, both of whom were supported by a working committee made up of Dart Group and Advanced Business Solutions' representatives. We went live bang on schedule and had all the support we needed throughout the whole process."*

A success from the start

Immediate benefits were noticed by Dart Group once the new financial system was up and running and OpenAccounts financials is now in place in all the companies within the group. Everyone is working with the same system and accounting and finance information and statistics are now consolidated without having to retrieve the information from numerous

spreadsheets. OpenAccounts' EDR Reporting module also configures the information to suit the needs of the individual user, saving time and increasing efficiency throughout the company. This is one of the many benefits of OpenAccounts' software that has helped Dart Group.

Dennis Billings adds: *"We can now access much more detailed financial information. For analysis purposes, the information is already configured for you; dependent on which particular view of the information you want. We can have as much or as little detail as we require and it makes it much easier to be selective when sending information out to the relevant managers. No longer do managers have to scroll through reams and reams of reports to access the information that is important to them."*

One of the features lacking in all of the old systems used by the group was links to third party software systems.

The OpenAccounts' solution includes OpenLink integration functionality, which enables OpenAccounts Financials to link with any other third party systems currently being used by the group. For the different divisions of Dart Group this function is vital as they have several different specialist operational systems already in place to cope with the diverse nature of their businesses. The reliability of the system has also been greatly appreciated by the group.

Dennis Billings comments: *"We now know that we have a system that really works. We have an excellent Advanced Business Solutions support team and any problems are dealt with in a timely manner. As it was a new system for the whole company, training was obviously needed. All training was easy to follow and is ongoing for helping us to deal with upgrades and new modules that we might want to implement."*

One of the main reasons why Dart Group chose OpenAccounts was the software's flexibility. The group is a constantly expanding organisation and it needed an accounting and finance solution that wouldn't impede its growth. The OpenAccounts' solution has allowed the group to continue to grow, enfranchising more users, without having to change the system or pay for costly upgrades.

Plans for the future

Dart Group is currently testing Advanced's new functionality and hopes to have all core ledgers running on the latest version in the not too distant future. They are also evaluating other OpenAccounts modules. In particular, Dennis Billings can foresee OpenAccounts eBIS Exchange solution providing major benefits for the company, which would streamline the document workflow throughout the organisation, increasing efficiency and decreasing the number of man hours currently spent doing this.

Particularly for the group's airline and air transportation business, the company is considering OpenAccounts' stock module to control and report on cabin sales and stock replenishment on the scheduled passenger flights it operates. The group is also looking into OpenAccounts' project accounting module to control capital expenditure and to provide information on route costings and profitability, again for its passenger airline.

Dennis Billings concludes: *"Advanced Business Solutions has helped us to support and develop our growth so far. We are really pleased with the levels of service and functionality provided by the OpenAccounts solutions and can see no reason why OpenAccounts' other modules won't benefit us in the same way. It is an exciting time for Advanced Business Solutions and for us - we're experimenting with other OpenAccounts solutions in ways that Advanced Business Solutions has never envisaged, working together to ensure we get the right solutions for the right tasks."*

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