

Arrow fits the Mould for Picton Hopkins

Picton Hopkins & Sons Pty Ltd is specialist Australian manufacturer of plaster products such as cornices, columns, archways, ceiling roses and panels. Founded in 1857, the family-owned company recognised the need to overhaul its financial management system to compete effectively in the 21st century. It chose Arrow partner Evolution Business Systems (EBS) to deploy Arrow Financials to solve the problem.



Business problem – out-of-date information

Picton Hopkins & Sons is a Victorian company with its head office in Preston and three remote offices at Bairnsdale, Morwell & Sale.

John Hopkins, the fifth generation Director of Picton Hopkins, said the company's former financial system had held it back. "Everything in our system was historical," he explained.

"It was an antiquated system that didn't match our requirements, so we didn't know what to expect with Arrow, or just how far we could progress.

"Real-time information is business-critical, so that was a priority for the company. We needed instant information and the ability to manage the country offices from Melbourne. Consistency across the business was also important for us – issues like the ability to establish special pricing platforms for various customers and to manage these for our country customers from head office."

Picton Hopkins selected Arrow Business Partner Evolution Business Systems (EBS) to manage the migration to Arrow Financials.

EBS director Paul Woods said selecting Arrow Financials was a major step for Picton Hopkins,

"The company essentially ran a paper-based workbook supported by an historical accounting system," he said.

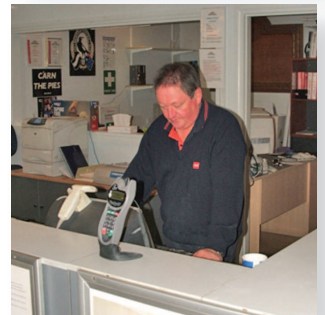
"There was great scope to streamline processes and deliver new management tools that would give them a real view of their performance – from product costing and pricing to sales data and linking the country offices for real-time information."

Technology solution – Arrow Financials

Arrow Financials is an integrated financial system that provides intelligent management tools. Picton Hopkins is running Arrow Financials modules including General Ledger, Debtors, Creditors, Stock, Fixed Assets, Payroll and Front Counter. All transactions are now recorded in Arrow, allowing them to be both handled online and reported instantly.

The technology supporting Arrow Financials is straightforward – Microsoft Windows Terminal Server and ADSL broadband to ensure fast data transfer to and from remote offices.

EBS' Paul Woods said Arrow Financials was a great fit for Picton Hopkins. "It provides a lot of room for the business to grow," he said.



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"We were coming from an antiquated system that didn't match our requirements so we didn't know what to expect with Arrow, or just how far we could progress. We can't believe how much simpler managing the business has turned out."

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"We worked in stages to introduce Arrow to the business although the migration of data was straight-forward. We imported the data directly into Arrow from Microsoft Excel. This comprised more than 3000 line items of stock plus customer information. We also performed data integrity checks to identify any errors.

"We trained Kate in admin to become the in-house Arrow product champion to support branch staff as needed. In 99 per cent of problems that occur, we can talk her through them on the phone."

EBS also linked Crystal Reports to Arrow Financials, giving Picton Hopkins greater flexibility to generate management reports "Crystal Reports has proved a winner," said Mr. Woods. "The level of detail Picton can now obtain via these management reports has provided a new perspective of its operations."

Business benefits – real-time information for decisions

Mr. Hopkins said Arrow Financials had made Picton Hopkins more efficient and streamlined its business processes.

"We can't believe how much simpler managing the business has turned out," he said.

"Our front counter (POS) system is linked directly into Arrow, we get daily sales reports from the country branches, payroll is a piece of cake and BAS is completed in next to no time. We have freed up one person in admin. Kate has had fantastic training from the EBS team and now manages all the financials with support from EBS as new things come up."

Mr. Hopkins credits the success of the Arrow implementation to planning and support by EBS during all stages of the migration. "Paul and the EBS team helped us get there," he said.

"What we thought would be complicated, like moving the data to a new system, was simple and painless. Our learning curve has been a steep one, but the service we receive from EBS has been second to none."

"During the past two years, we've built a very strong relationship. They take the time to listen to what we need, get back to us when

we do have problems almost instantly and are straight-shooters in all of their dealings. We couldn't ask for more – we really appreciate the hands-on support and strategic input that Evolution provides."

Mr. Hopkins admits he once found new technology intimidating. "While computers were not my thing, now we couldn't live without the management information that Arrow gives us," he said.

"Every part of the business is streamlined. We are just so much more efficient in how we operate and interact with our customers. We now have time to share a cup of coffee in the morning and plan the business rather than just work on the books. In addition, our accounting fees are put to better use – the spend with our accountant is now directed at a more strategic level."

Picton Hopkins also intends to establish remote access to the system, so members of its management team can log-in from home to share information. "Once you've experienced the difference made by Arrow's accurate, real-time management information, the bar gets higher in terms of your expectations," said Mr. Hopkins.

"We are so open-minded now to the possibilities that smart technology and clever systems can provide...and we look to EBS as our trusted advisors to provide this guidance."



More about Evolution Business Systems...

Evolution Business Systems (EBS) is a leading Arrow Business Partner that sells, supports and implements the Arrow Financial Software product range. EBS also has expertise in using Crystal Reports and Microsoft SQL reporting tools to enhance data reporting and analysis.

EBS has a detailed implementation strategy that is tailored to customers in terms of timelines, requirements, risks and responsibilities as well as project variations and external requirements.

While it does not sell or support hardware or site network environments, EBS informally partners with selected specialists in these areas to provide clients with a "total solution".

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Evolution Business Systems Pty Ltd
PO Box 1115, Camberwell, VIC 3124
p 1300 303 973 f 1300 858 973
e info@ebssys.com.au w www.ebssys.com.au

evolution
business systems®