

Case Study

Laser Crystal

Deploying Codeless Platforms Business Suite
(Promotional Sector Edition)



Case Study Laser Crystal



Company Details

Based in Poole, Dorset, Laser Crystal is one of the UK's leading specialist 3D laser engravers dedicated to meeting the needs and deadlines of the corporate gift market. Laser Crystal was established in 1999 and fast became one of the UK's leading manufacturers of 3D laser engraved crystal awards and promotional gifts.



The Challenge

- Replace expensive existing system
- Find a flexible, more efficient system
- Migrate existing data
- Deliver better information management

Applications used

- Codeless Platforms Business Suite (Promotional Sector Edition)
- Sage 50



The Solution

- Installed tailor-made system
- Integrated Business Suite with Sage 50
- Developed Job Management module
- Automated numerous processes

Platform & Capabilities Used

- Applications Platform
- BPA Platform
 - ⇒ Report & Document Automation
 - ⇒ Data Integration & Synchronisation



The Results

- Migrated all data without risk
- New system now provides all functionality required
- Cloud-based system provides freedom

i The Challenge

Time for a change

Laser Crystal Ltd. had been relying on a fairly basic business system, designed for the promotional gifts market, for the past seven years. It had accepted the limitations of the system due to the amount of data it held and how reliant the business had become on it - a concern that any company can relate to. However, a sudden demand of an increase in licensing and support fees swiftly changed the management's attitude.

"The system wasn't very flexible in terms of what it could do and there was a lot more functionality we wanted. We kind of accepted that this was the system we had and, obviously, it had all our existing data on it," explained Andrea Hatcher, Managing Director, Laser Crystal Ltd. "However, we got to a point where the provider demanded a very substantial price increase for us. It was so large that we were left with no other option - we had to find a new system."

Finding a suitable new product

Laser Crystal thus began a journey of scouring the market to find what alternative systems were available, what they were capable of and figuring out their limitations.

"We wanted a system with much more efficiency, functionality and information management, that was incredibly simple to use. People are trying to run a business, not trying to manage their systems. The system just has to work. They are absolutely key to any business, but something the business doesn't want to have to worry about," said Hatcher.

"The one thing that struck me during our research was that some systems developed for the promotional gifts market couldn't capture and push any of our existing data into them. For us, that was a prerequisite. We definitely didn't want to lose any of our historical data. That is really important information for us."

Central to this requirement, was that the new system had to be able to manage historical data - the ability to check previous quotes and orders: what did a customer pay a year ago; what did they last order; what did they last have. This information is absolutely vital to Laser Crystal.

"Quotes can have more than one revision. For example, we can revise a quote three or four times for a customer. Obviously, we need that history because a customer, who is on revision four, can turn around and say, 'Actually, we've decided we like the crystal shape that was on the first quote'. So you need to be able to have the history to run back through the revisions. That was something that was really important to us and we didn't want to lose - we had to make sure it came with us."

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Managing Director



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The Solution

Deploying a fully customisable system

Laser Crystal eventually selected Codeless Platforms Business Suite (Promotional Sector Edition) – a fully customisable, business management system built specifically for distributors and suppliers in the promotional products industry – which provides all the functionality that is required to run a business - from opportunities, quotes and pricing to account management, campaigns and sales orders.

The flexibility of Business Suite, due to being built on Codeless Platforms' rapid application development platform, meant that Laser Crystal was able to completely tailor the system to meet its business needs and deliver the functionality it had been craving, adding new features and functionality throughout the deployment.

"One of the things that has impressed us the most is Codeless Platforms' development team and how good they are. How much they know about the system," said Hatcher. "When we want something changing, it's regularly changed within minutes. Or it's changed when we are on the phone to them. And they are literally doing it in live-time and our changes are there."

Managing the sales process

Laser Crystal's sales process is primarily handled by three modules within Codeless Platforms Business Suite – Opportunities, Quotations and Sales Orders. The modules each manage a certain aspect of the sales cycle, utilising all the data entered or imported into the Business Suite.

The Opportunities module handles the initial enquiry and provides all the fields required to enter the relevant data such as contact details, total potential / probability of the sale, and the source of the lead.

When the quote has been created the Quotation module enables Laser Crystal to send quotes fast and effectively, automatically generating an HTML email and a PDF, for sending or printing, at the click of a button, all from within the system. Once a quote has been accepted, and an order placed by the customer, Laser Crystal creates an order by simply clicking the Convert to Order button from within the Quotation module.

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Laser Crystal also utilises a number of other modules with Business Suite including the Products module to manage its entire product catalogue including stock levels, and the Pricing module to manage list-based pricing, customer discount levels and tiered pricing.

Further customisation

As Laser Crystal wanted to keep using its accounting package, Sage 50, for invoicing and managing accounts, Codeless Platforms' BPA Platform was deployed to provide the integration between the two systems as well as automate numerous processes.

Another feature that Laser Crystal wanted to include in the system was a Job Management module to provide visibility and searchability of the production process for each order, which was historically being managed with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The module helps indicate the priority and status of the production of each order, and also catalogues the designs (artwork and CAD files) used with each order. This enables Laser Crystal to re-use designs for future orders with a similar requirement, helping improve efficiency and reduce duplication.

"The Job Management module, which we are currently finalising, is going to be fantastic. It's going to change our business quite considerably. We are also looking at implementing a Courier module to handle our fulfilment and delivery processes. If we can manage the whole process within one system, it is going to make our business much more efficient; and those efficiencies will ultimately lead to cost savings," explained Hatcher.

"The amount of automation that we can introduce due to BPA Platform is superb. The less human tasking of manual processes there are the less chance you have of things going wrong and things going missing. The more processes that we can automate in our business the better it will be. It also means that, the more you automate, anyone else can pick up someone else's job part way through."

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The Result

No risk data migration

As with any business or organisation, transferring data to an entirely new system is always going to be a concern. In Laser Crystal's situation, this was accentuated due to the time-constraints imposed on migrating all the data, due to the cut-off date of its existing system.

"I must admit, it was quite a stressful time. For two reasons. Firstly, not understanding the process. Data isn't our business, so we don't necessarily understand how to get the data out of one system into another. We had other companies say that they couldn't do that, so we were obviously a bit nervous."

"Secondly, we were worried about losing some of our history. Everyone was under a huge amount of pressure to get the data migration done as they only had three weeks to complete it. There was no maybe, perhaps, let's have a good stab at it...this was the end. And the end was nigh," revealed Hatcher.

"Transferring the actual customer information was extremely easy. However, you just don't realise how much information you hold in your system (in terms of all the pricing, all the photographs of all the products) and how much work is actually involved in transferring systems."

"We were putting a huge amount of faith in Codeless Platforms and trusting them and the product to deliver what was promised. And my goodness, they did. We now have a system that we really wanted. In fact, we've actually got something much, much better, that will give us far more information to help us grow as a business."

"Making the change was so easy because Codeless Platforms did everything for us. That's kind of the key to it all really - the fact that Codeless Platforms make it so easy. Business owners just want their staff to walk in one morning, have some training on a new system and off they go. When you have used a system for a long time you are going to get an element of resistance within your team. However, it wasn't too bad for us because everybody knew that we had to make the change, and Business Suite is very easy to use."

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The Result

Freedom of the cloud

One of the key aspects that sets Business Suite apart from many other systems in this sector is that it is a cloud-based system, making it mobile ready and meaning that Laser Crystal's management can check on the business at any time, on any device; giving them the freedom to manage the business wherever they are.

"As it is cloud-based it gives us a much more flexibility. A great example was between Christmas and New Year. I could be on duty while at home: do the quotes, answer the phones and look after the inboxes," said Hatcher. "I'm also currently on holiday and I've been putting quotes on the system and emailing them to customers. I can check how many quotes people are putting on and look at management data. It just gives you that freedom to run the business from wherever are."

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Want to learn more?

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