

Redwood Business Solutions

Making complex processes easy to manage.

At A Glance

Industry

- Media

Environment

- In-house developed Windows .NET and Oracle distribution and order processing applications

Key Challenges

- Enabling business users to run, manage and control critical customer oriented business processes without relying on IT staff
- Managing growth

The Solution

- Cronacle business process automation
- Direct integration between business user interface and Cronacle automation

Key Benefits

- Improved customer service delivery
- Increased flexibility to accommodate growth
- Reduced reliance on IT to provide core business services

MARKETFORCE

Cronacle Helps Marketforce put Business Users in Control

Marketforce has implemented an efficient and responsive business model to remain profitable and sustain continuous growth, while ensuring top quality service levels to customers. To support the business and provide the same flexible, scalable and cost effective approach to streamlining business processes they implemented Cronacle.



Marketforce (UK) Ltd is the UK's leading newstrade sales, marketing and distribution specialist. Handling some of the country's best known magazines such as 'Marie Claire', 'Country Life' and 'Yachting Monthly' for large publishers such as IPC, Marketforce also offers services for the promotion and distribution of specialist publications from smaller publishers. With expertise in management of the entire distribution supply chain, Marketforce supplies over 500 titles to both retail and wholesale outlets ranging from small independent stores to large chains.

Focused on Business Efficiency

The Marketforce business model is based on efficient management of resources, such as distribution centers and transport, which are leased on an 'as needed' basis. This approach enables the

company to be highly profitable and responsive to change without compromising service. The ability to exploit this model and grow the business to its full potential was, however, being hindered by an IT infrastructure that was not able to support the 'just in time' nature of the business model. "We realized that, in order to meet the

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Applications Systems Manager,
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demands of the business, we had to give users the ability to manage and control key activities themselves” comments Tom Ben-Joseph, applications systems manager at Marketforce “So we developed applications in house for processing customer orders, tracking which publications are dispatched, where to, when and in what quantities that gave full control to the business users. This approach was designed to reduce reliance on IT staff and improve end to end efficiency of core business processes such as credit note generation, distribution lock down, claims for unsold copies and order validation.”

Streamlining business processes in this way was only possible with an automation solution that could respond in real time to external events and that could support process control delegated to business users rather than traditional IT operations staff. The existing supplier’s solution was not designed to respond in such a way and was not providing an acceptable level of service to the business. Marketforce chose to replace it with Cronacle, which they assessed as being the most suitable platform on which to build their user-driven automated processing environment.

Immediate Response to Business Information

Cronacle file events detect delivery of incoming claims, credit, invoice or issue information. “We make extensive use of Electronic Data Interchange and have to respond immediately to incoming information”, Tom Ben-Joseph explains. “What we required was a way of enabling users to process urgent work without reliance on IT staff. To do this we built interfaces into our applications enabling business staff to monitor processes that have been triggered automatically by Cronacle because data has arrived from a customer. Users can also initiate processing themselves”. This ‘self service’ approach provides the kind of flexibility

and responsiveness needed to support business user requirements.

An example of how this degree of automation benefits Marketforce is demonstrated in the ability to produce pre-emptive reports based on automatically detected and processed data from the Electronic Data Interchange based claims system. “These pre-emptive reports mean that business managers know the potential impact of claims very quickly and can make decisions based on up to date information”, Tom Ben-Joseph continues, “Similarly, key business users are sent a reminder, automatically, when Cronacle detects that expected processes, such as month end runs, have not started.”

Building a Solution for the Future

The Cronacle solution was also easy to integrate with Marketforce’s development environment of choice, which at the time of selection was Oracle. “Integration with Oracle was a huge benefit for us and enabled us to embed process automation to the extent that old fashioned IT operator dependent batch processing has become the day to day responsibility of business users.” Tom Ben-Joseph comments, “Now that we are making a strategic move to Microsoft .NET for application development we need to be certain that our infrastructure will remain unaffected. Cronacle provides that assurance and we have developed business user interfaces for .NET based applications that exploit Cronacle in the same way.”

The scalability of the solution has accommodated rapid growth and will support the increasing workload demands expected. Each day Marketforce run something in the region of

1500 jobs, most of which are unpredictable because of the nature of the business. Marketforce can be certain that their process automation solution will continue to support their business as it grows.

Benefiting the Business

Cronacle was implemented at Marketforce to solve a specific business problem and deliver improved service to business users. With both objectives achieved, Cronacle is now an integral component of the business. Tom Ben-Joseph concludes “Cronacle was brought in to solve one issue. It did this so well that it is now used everywhere. The philosophy of our business model is to grow without increasing assets. The Cronacle solution has supported significant growth in the business without any increase in IT headcount; this fits in totally with our business model.” Tom Ben-Joseph concludes, “The service delivered to our business users has improved to the degree that their expectations are now very high and yet most of the time they are not aware that Cronacle exists.”

