Case Study

Background

Based in Sydney, Smith & Tzannes is an architecture and urban planning practice. Having grown in size to 12 people since its formation, projects undertaken by the studio now include single dwellings, shared developments and community places across both the public and private sectors. Smith & Tzannes has a commitment to sustainable design, producing plans with maximum energy and water efficiency in mind, and prides itself on the personal approach offered to its clients.

Problem

Smith & Tzannes had been using a practice management system since 2008, however this was no longer suited to the needs of the growing team. Issues such as the duplication of data in multiple locations meant time was wasted rekeying information. Resource management data was stored in an Excel spreadsheet, but was disconnected from the rest of the project accounting system, and fee forecasting was conducted but the process required a lot of effort to make it meaningful and was quickly out of date. Smith & Tzannes also desired a more contemporary interface and streamlined integration with Outlook, as this is where staff spent most of their time. This combination of factors prompted the practice to look for an alternative solution. The practice's headline requirements included close integration with Outlook, to be web based, available on hand held devices, manage drawing issues, make resource forecasting easy and integrate seamlessly with MYOB.

Solution

Smith & Tzannes was already aware of the Union Square for AEC Professionals system, which offers a fully centralised approach to information management supported by four core databases: contacts, organisations, enquiries and projects. A more in-depth look at the solution revealed that Union Square was far ahead of the competition in terms of providing a truly integrated approach.

Company
Smith & Tzannes

Business
Architecture and Urban Planning

Number of staff
12

Solution
Union Square for AEC Professionals

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On comparison of features, Smith & Tzannes found that the Union Square solution met all of its existing requirements and offered additional functionality which met needs that the practice had not initially considered.

A few factors were key in the decision to invest. Firstly, the future development of the solution was of key interest as the practice wanted to invest in a progressive system with an aggressive roadmap. Fantastic levels of integration with Outlook together with an array of powerful modules and features that could positively impact all aspects of the practice compelled the investment. Secondly the direct support of a Union Square consultant based in Australia meant that the practice was certain to receive the very best levels of service not commonly available through a reseller.

Implementation

The practice opted for a two-stage approach, beginning with document and drawing management. During this time staff were given access to training material, including online video tutorials, to help prepare them for the "go live" date. After three months' successful running the practice was keen to get using the additional Project Accounting functionality. A further two months of implementation and configuration time saw this extra functionality up and running.

Benefits

Smith & Tzannes is realising multiple benefits from Union Square, including:

- **Integrated mobile working** – access to a secure application allowing for fast retrieval of information out of the office, including contact and project information.

- **Controlled document issuing** – publishing and issuing documents and drawings to external parties is both quick and simple, removing the need for third party file sharing solutions and with the additional benefit of being able to track when documents have been downloaded.

- **Effective resource planning** – instant, real-time visibility of project costs, with a graphical interface and traffic light alert system, ensures information is clear and visible and that the right information is available to the right people at the right time.

- **Continued ownership of data** – data is accessed through a familiar web interface via Internet Explorer but is stored on the practice's own server, ensuring ownership of its own information is retained.

A Q&A with
Peter Smith,
Director

How have things moved on since the initial implementation?

We've invested in the additional mobile functionality as well as the Milestones module. Once configured, this will allow us to create checklists for Q&A purposes, ensuring we enhance the service we are providing.

Are there any new ways of working?

Sadly the system doesn't allow me to head down to the beach instead of being in the office. However, Union Square sits in the background and allow us to focus on providing design and professional services rather than spending time operating software. It's become such a part of the way we do things that you don't even notice you're using it!

You have invested more than $50,000, how do you justify that investment?

We are a practice that has always punched above its weight. To deliver fantastic service we employ exceptional people and expect them to run their own administration. Part of our strategy is to provide them with world class tools to support them in their jobs and enable them to be highly efficient effective when delivering work and responding to client requirements. The investment is significant but an essential part of our business strategy and fully justified. In our calculations the investment is returned within the first year.

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Contact us for more information on all our product offerings and how we can help transform your approach.

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