

Removing the "drama" with effective synchronization between CRM and accounting/finance..

CASE STUDY



Spotlight Reaps Business Rewards by Replacing Great Plains with Cloud-based Aqilla.

Spotlight, the home of theatre, television and film casting, is no stranger to the concept of transition when it comes to maintaining the business's market-leading position. Having started out in the '20s as a printed casting directory, now in its 90th year, Spotlight has maintained its position in the hub of the performing arts industry by digitally transforming the business.

The directory went online in the '90s allowing the company to focus on developing new ways to engage actors and professionals with agents and directors. Its portfolio of services now extends to include studio and room hire as well as showcase events. A Cloud-based IT strategy has allowed the company to transform their business processes and significantly reduce time and costs which can be redeployed for growth.

Aiming to get the full benefits of a Cloud approach, **Spotlight's CFO Claire Adams** began the process of replacing the outdated, expensive and high-maintenance Great Plains accounting software with a Cloud-based solution.

“We can now generate management reports in the click of a button”

She says, *“We looked at Xero but it was too small for the volume of transactions we have and also NetSuite which was too complicated. We chose Aqilla primarily because it is designed by UK accounts specialists. Unlike others, it is not a US product disguised as a local one. We also like the fact that the business is similar to ours in size and approach. We have a very good relationship with the team at Aqilla and that is important to us. It became obvious at the Aqilla user*

conference that we are working with people who share our goals and that we are part of a like-minded user community.”

Hugh Scantlebury, MD at Aqilla responds, *“We were delighted when Spotlight came on board. They are exactly the kind of business we like to work with. The team has clear goals, great ideas and is an active and respected voice in our user community.”*

Software Integration is simple in the cloud

Spotlight’s income is mainly comprised of high volume subscription fees and billing occurs daily as subscriptions are renewed. Claire explains, *“The majority of our income documentation is generated outside of the accounting system. Before implementing Aqilla, synchronising this with our accounts was a much more complicated process.”*

Spotlight uses a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system by Microsoft to manage contracts and renewals. Due to Aqilla’s Cloud architecture and Open API, Spotlight has been able to integrate both systems so that renewal information is automatically populated in Aqilla and an invoice is generated.

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Summing up

On her experience working with the team at Aqilla, Spotlight **CFO Claire Adams** comments, *“The main success factor in the transition from Great Plains to Aqilla is the working relationship we have with the team. Not only have we had a consistent and dedicated account manager, implementer and support team, they are all passionate about what they do. The company appears to be led from the top and has a clear and continuous development stream and – equally important - an active client base which drives innovation.”*

Improving processes and managing costs

Aqilla comes with built-in workflows for standard approval processes however the finance team at Spotlight wanted to adapt these workflows to their specific needs. Claire says, *“One of the benefits of working with Aqilla is the level of attention we get as clients. With a larger supplier, we might be waiting for months to have adaptations made by an implementer; with Aqilla, it was done straight away.”* Claire adds, *“The fact that we are all accessing one and the same system in the Cloud means we are always on the latest version and the software is continually being improved. With Great Plains, we might have been three or four versions behind and upgrading would come at a price.”*

Time savings on reporting and more to come...

With the core accounting processes in place and the system integration complete, **CFO Claire Adams** wants to get more out of Aqilla’s reporting features, particularly Aqilla’s preferred query builder, Sharperlight. She says, *“We can now generate management reports in the click of a button but we know it can do so much more to improve our overall business intelligence. Aqilla has made life much simpler for my processing staff and reporting is definitely easier already but we want to use the time that we are saving to explore the system further.”*