RFB&D: "Learning Through Listening" With Sage 500 ERP

Life-transforming is how users of Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D) describe their books on CD and tape. Miraculous is a better description of the process that the nonprofit uses to create and distribute the 100,000+ titles in its library.

A loyal cadre of 6,000 volunteers record textbooks at all educational levels in 29 studios around the country. Studio booth time must be carefully allocated according to book inventories, release dates, and volunteers' availability. Yet although the organization is run like a major corporate manufacturer, until recently it relied on an antiquated accounts payable system, a financial package designed for small nonprofits doing donor management, and scheduling processes.

Modernized Manufacturing

"It's just not possible to run a modern manufacturing operation with systems that are 20 years old," explains Peter Beran, senior vice president of information technology. "We had Blackbaud Accounting plus RaisersEdge. These were good in their own way. But they could not handle our needs for dynamic scheduling, powerful manufacturing, and distribution management."

RFB&D selected Sage 500 ERP* with a full complement of financial and manufacturing modules, and implemented it across the enterprise over 15 months. Now the software manages everything from sales and inventory to back-end financials and scheduling.

"Information flows seamlessly from our customer relationship management software into Sage 500 ERP," Beran says. "Our accounts payable, general ledger, and accounts receivable are all incorporated through Sage 500 ERP. This gives us new levels of accountability plus a complete spectrum of financial reports that we never had before. Integrating our back-office systems with the rest of our operations was a primary objective, and Sage 500 ERP has done the job extremely well."

*Sage 500 ERP was named Sage ERP MAS 500 when Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D) initially implemented this solution. The product names have been updated in this case study to reflect current naming.

Customer
Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D)

Industry
Nonprofit library

Location
Princeton, NJ

Number of Locations
22

Number of Employees
500 full-time, 6,000 volunteers

System
Sage 500 ERP

Challenge
Existing Blackbaud and RaisersEdge software could not support sophisticated manufacturing processes, coordinate multilocation recording schedules, or manage finances.

Solution
Sage 500 ERP with suite of financial and manufacturing modules, creating a fully integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.

Results
Sage 500 ERP contributed to double-digit increase in book production last year through better scheduling and information flow.

Scheduling by Chapter

Once a book is selected for recording, the project is assigned a work order in Sage 500 ERP. The book is then divided into sections. Routing slips are sent to notify appropriate studios with the parts they will record. When it's time to burn a CD, studios dial up Sage 500 ERP in Princeton with their routing number. Through the Advanced Planning and Scheduling module, all projects are consolidated on a Schedule Board. Custom reports allow RFB&D managers to view scheduling and status data however they like.

The Advanced Manufacturing module in Sage 500 ERP has also allowed RFB&D to implement just-in-time manufacturing for greater efficiencies and cost controls. "For the first time in our history, we recorded 5,000 books this year," says Beran. "This represents a double-digit increase in production, made possible in part by the powerful scheduling tools in Sage 500 ERP. Because of the software, we are using our resources to greater effect. Also, we are seeing steady improvements in the amount of time spent on financial management."

RFB&D also uses Sage HRMS to maintain personnel records for several hundred employees both at headquarters and at its remote locations. Sage HRMS is a comprehensive, fully integrated tool for managing critical employee information, which streamlines administrative workflow and frees up time for addressing strategic business issues.

Win for Everyone

"From the outset, we were impressed with the capabilities of Sage 500 ERP compared with its competitors and have not been disappointed," Beran notes. "All of the goals we established for our new system have been achieved. We are even looking at expanding its capabilities with functions like data mining."

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The big winners, however, are the RFB&D members with print disabilities, who have vast numbers of new titles available to them. "Our organization was founded nearly 60 years ago on the premise that education is a right, not a privilege," Beran says. "Sage 500 ERP allows us to improve access to the printed world, and thus helps us to better accomplish our mission."

About Sage

Sage North America is part of The Sage Group plc, a leading global supplier of business management software and services. At Sage, we live and breathe business every day. We are passionate about helping our customers achieve their ambitions. Our range of business software and services is continually evolving as we innovate to answer our customers' needs. Our solutions support accounting, operations, customer relationship management, human resources, time tracking, merchant services, and the specialized needs of the construction, distribution, manufacturing, nonprofit, and real estate industries. The Sage Group plc, formed in 1981, was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1989 and now employs 12,300 people and supports more than 6 million customers worldwide. For more information, please visit the website at www.SageNorthAmerica.com or call 866-996-7243. Follow Sage North America on Facebook at: http://www.facebook.com/SageNorthAmerica and Twitter at: http://twitter.com/#!/sagenamerica.

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