

ITD plough through ASA expectations...



The Business

ASA provides world class FOSFA and GAFTA approved independent inspection and agriculture laboratory services.

The Alex Stewart Agriculture Group is supported by the A. Norman Tate and Huson and Hardwick Laboratories, and offers a complete range of agricultural analytical, inspection and certification services for the facilitation of the international trading of soft commodities including raw & refined sugar, oils & fats, bio diesel, cereals, fertilisers and other food products.

Staff work globally inspecting sites and products and reporting back to Head Office / requesting certification and invoicing services.

Systems Developed:

- Online client reporting
- Web based app for recording, managing and invoicing inspections

Technologies Used:

- SQL Server 2005 DB
- ASP.Net
- Windows forms
- Sage Line 50 Integration

The Challenge

Alex Stewart Agriculture required a bespoke solution to manage laboratory jobs and ship inspections. Their existing system was based on old technology and did not migrate / interface with their new hardware / accounting needs.

The laboratory system was required to manage quotations for prospective clients, new and existing jobs, record sample results and maintain a log of compliance for the UKAS governing body. In addition all jobs would eventually need to be invoiced via SAGE line 50 and automatically create various certification and invoicing requirements.

The Inspections system would record a number of details regarding the shipment location, vessel, port, load/discharge weights, currency and invoice amounts. In addition, the system would need to synchronise with the laboratory program so that invoicing could take place - into SAGE. It was necessary for the inspections solution to be highly portable, as many inspections take place world-wide.

The Solutions

IT Developers only needed a short period of time discussing the requirements of both systems. It was clear from the onset that SQL to SQL replication solutions were required to facilitate up-to-date data synchronisation.

The solution was a two part package, with a windows form based application for creating quotes, booking jobs, recording analysis and invoicing clients and working synchronously with an ASP.Net web based application for recording, managing and invoicing inspections.

Both solutions required individual SQL server 2005 databases. One located at Alex Stewart's head office and the other on a secure webserver.

In order to maintain integrity between client tables and allow inspection jobs to be invoiced, a synchronisation script was developed to replicate data between SQL databases in real time.

The end result has had a considerable increase in productivity and allowed Alex Stewart Agriculture to move away from spreadsheet based records.