



How Epicor and Precise helped WA Newspapers Holdings come to grips with the realities of the digital age



“After 25 years of a custom-built system, we didn’t just need the right ERP platform to replace it – we needed the right partner to help us implement and build on it. We found that partner in Precise.”



Robert Ingley,
Group Management Accountant, WAN

The West Australian

West Australian Newspapers Holdings (WAN) is a global media and publishing company.

HIGHLIGHTS

CHALLENGES

- Broadly spread and wide-ranging business interests
- Outdated incumbent financial and procurement system
- Inefficient data, information management, reporting capacity
- Little control or visibility of procurement and purchasing processes

SOLUTION

- Flexible system to cater for changing needs of the business
- Fully automated financial management
- Seamless integration with existing applications
- Tight control of procurement and purchasing process

RESULTS

- Substantial increase in efficiency
- Increased visibility across the business
- Ease of integration with other applications and access to real-time data
- Efficient and trouble-free installation and implementation

Goals

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR OPERATIONAL AND COST EFFICIENCY

Robert Ingley has seen a thing or two in his time with West Australian Newspapers Holdings (WAN). Mr Ingley, Group Management Accountant at the company, quips that the media outlet was using green screen computers when he joined WAN more than 25 years ago and continued to do so for decades after.

The flagship of the Group is The West Australian daily newspaper, first published in 1833. By 2009 WAN's interests had grown to more than 20 regional print publications, online news and information provision, a radio network, and suburban community newspapers.

“With our range of different businesses across such a large area, we had become very inefficient in our data collection, information management or reporting,” says Robert.

”

Capital investment initiatives to transform systems and processes to gain operational and cost efficiencies became strategic imperatives for the Group, in particular, replacing the incumbent WAN Finance and Procurement System.

WAN has always had a very disciplined approach to managing the cost of operations and expenses.

However, the geographically dispersed nature of operations, together with the sheer number of publication titles and print quantity of each publication, placed pressure on the Group's capacity to efficiently manage the stock of materials and resources required for the production and distribution of its publications.

Challenges

A VENDOR THAT UNDERSTOOD THEIR UNIQUE BUSINESS CHALLENGES

The length and breadth of WAN's operations made it one of the most geographically dispersed media outlets in the world, creating some unique business management challenges over the years. And the company knew it had to modernise to be better prepared for the next evolution of its business model.

“

“Everything was entered into a green screen application, journals were going into a mainframe, the system only really looked after Accounts Payable, and we were reporting up to four weeks after month end,” Robert recalls.

”

By 2010 the company had successfully completed the implementation of a new advertising management system to enable individually targeted ad packages across its print and broadcast offerings.

They required a financial and procurement management system that could handle the significant volume of advertising transactions and easily integrate with their new advertising management system. WAN looked at several vendors prior to selecting Epicor. Early in the process, one pulled out because it couldn't handle the volume of the company's transactions.

“

“Surprisingly, we quickly found that even newer solutions available in the marketplace were simply not scalable enough for WA Newspapers because of the sheer number of transactions to process and the variety of sources these relate to,” explains Robert.

”

Mr Ingley noted that the nature of running a newspaper meant handling huge amounts of accounts receivable transactions.

From advertising agencies who purchased ad space, companies who paid subscriptions directly and received discounts, individual advertisements from local subscribers, shops who bought the papers, to expenses for delivery services. WAN was manually handling six different types of customer billing and errors were a common problem.



One of the best results to come from Epicor has been improved efficiency across the business. Before Epicor, the paper had 30 people on staff to handle all the transactions. In the three years since implementing the solution, this number had been cut down by more than a third.

Robert Ingley, Group Management Accountant
West Australian Newspapers Holdings

Solution

FLEXIBLE AND SCALABLE SOFTWARE WITH SERIOUS TRANSACTION VOLUME CAPABILITIES

In 2011, WAN commissioned Precise Business Solutions to help them implement Epicor ERP, along with the tightly integrated companion product Epicor Advanced Requisition Management (ARM), to transform their financial and procurement operations.

Ultimately, the decision to choose Epicor was easy – it could handle the heavy load of WAN’s transactions, was intuitive and user-friendly, and did not require much IT intervention or training.

From Mr Ingley’s perspective, nothing moved the company into the next generation like its adoption of Epicor’s flagship mid-market ERP solution to realise new cultures, efficiencies, and technologies to support the challenges of fast-moving business environments.

“

“Every ad that flows through comes from the advertising system and then moves to Epicor, which deals with all the billing. That’s about one million transactions a year – it’s huge.

But Epicor gobbles that up and stores it right down to the Nth degree for every ad in the system,” Robert enthuses.

”

ERP systems are designed to integrate, automate, and streamline business processes across various departments, and for WAN, Epicor ERP met all its business requirements.

WAN’s solution combined a business and financial management system with strong and integrated requisition and procurement functionality to enable tight purchasing controls and inventory management.

Plus, they now had a system that would provide a centralised data and information management platform to enable improved reporting capabilities.

The final key element though was their choice of partner to help with the project.

“

“The Board of Directors described the Precise installation as the most efficient trouble-free software installation and implementation in the Group’s history,” recalls Robert.

”

Mr Ingley says the Precise Solutions Architect ensured the Epicor platform not only played nicely with other key line of business applications but utilised Epicor’s advanced service-oriented architecture to facilitate the integration and work as part of their broader IT strategy.

Results

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL ‘GO-LIVE’ – ON TIME AND ON BUDGET

No-one else on the planet has the customised solution Precise engineered to ensure Epicor would seamlessly integrate with WAN’s new advertising management system. Facilitating the transfer and delivery of data between the business applications required a novel approach to systems integration.

Mr Ingley says he was thoroughly impressed by a group of “very clever people” from Precise Business Solutions who made the implementation smooth and quick.

There was a Technical Consultant always on hand to help manage the deployment and was extremely knowledgeable and helpful for all technical inquiries. Another Senior Consultant was tasked with looking over the after-integration processes, and the fourth main implementer helped the process through lateral thinking and solving all integration issues.

The result was a highly successful ‘go live’ – on time and on budget. These were very important outcomes for WAN’s Board who had evaluated long and hard the business case for the project.



“Because of the system’s strengths and user friendliness, we also didn’t need to bring in consultants all the time to nurse things along – we were able to manage and adapt it as we needed to ourselves,” Robert reflects.



ERP software is designed to grow with a business, allowing companies to scale up or down as needed without having to invest in new systems or infrastructure. Since the initial Epicor ERP installation in 2011, WAN has taken advantage of the scalability of Epicor ERP.

Over time, consulting resources were used to implement specific financial, supply chain and procurement elements and improved business processes. Underlying this was constant, proactive, and careful project management and executive sponsorship built on trust and a mutual desire for a great result.

WAN purchased the optional Epicor Advanced Requisition Management (ARM) module AP Approval Workflow in 2018 to drive even greater cost savings and efficiencies in their accounts payable department.

With ARM AP Approval Workflow, WAN fully automated their procure-to-pay process and eliminated manual input of invoices by using Intelligent Data Capture technology, or ‘touchless invoicing’.

“

“One of the best results to come from Epicor has been improved efficiency across the business. Before Epicor, the paper had 30 people on staff to handle all the transactions. In the three years since implementing the solution, this number had been cut down by more than a third,” Robert enthuses.

”

And Epicor’s ARM function, an extension of the standard purchasing functionality, allowed WAN to integrate all of its procurement and inventory controls with its financial systems, and enabled greater visibility and management of the data in areas such as the company’s cash flow.

The WAN team was able to configure much of this on their own and brought further improvements and significant savings to the business. Looking ahead, the media company says it expects their industry to continue riding a period of massive change.

Thanks to the flexibility and agility of Epicor it can easily integrate new systems and entities, the solution can be adapted as required to meet new challenges or take on new opportunities no matter what growth and change lies in the future.

In 2011 WAN acquired the Seven Media Group. This merger created one company – Seven West Media – Australia’s largest diversified multi-platform media business with a leading presence in broadcast television, radio, print and online publishing.



An Enterprise Resource Planning system can revolutionise the way a business operates. Helping to solve business challenges that have slowly been getting worse over time, and empowering businesses with the agility and flexibility needed to pivot quickly in our ever changing business landscape.

Mark Batina, Managing Director
Precise Business Solutions

Focus on what's important to your business.

Precise gives you the software solutions expertise you need to make everyday business processes easier and more efficient.



[Contact the ERP experts](#)