



BLAZING THE DIGIT- ISATION *trail*

INSYTE SOFTWARE POINTS TO A NEW DECADE OF DIGITISATION AS IT CEMENTS ITS PLACE AS A SPECIALIST PROVIDER FOR THE WINDOW FURNISHINGS SECTOR.

DAWN ADAMS REPORTS.

GENERAL PURPOSE PRODUCT

IN 2003, Kerry Spero established Insyte Software to provide solutions for a variety of industries. But that original concept was quickly adapted after Sydney Blinds & Screen became its second customer.

Loryn Jenkins, the firm's operations manager, tells how fate intervened when he contacted Insyte Software in 2003 while he was working as the IT manager for Sydney Blinds & Screens. At the time, he was calling for tenders for a project to provide software that would meet the needs of this

growing business, which still relied on a paper-based system.

Jenkins is keenly aware precisely when Insyte Software was selected as the preferred vendor. "They were willing to write a custom application for Sydney Blinds & Screens," he says. "We found our niche in window furnishings very early although it took us a number of years to recognise that was indeed the niche we should pursue." Today, the business is entirely focused on the window furnishings sector.

SYDNEY BLINDS & SCREENS was given exclusive use of the software for four years. After that time, it underwent a series of redevelopment programs to ensure it evolved into a more general purpose product for the industry with the technology significantly enhanced over time.

"We're using the same technology stack, the architecture hasn't changed, but the depth of functionality addressing the window furnishings industry has been significantly enhanced," he says. "For example, we have

work flow technology that drives activities and monitors and checks for conditions in the processing flow of orders. It creates activities when things run late and alerts people to things they have to attend to."

An initial challenge was to develop the configuration engine, a task Jenkins admits was extremely difficult. "The blinds industry has very specific requirements for what it needs to do in a product configurator in order to represent all the available product options without

presenting options that can't be built," he says. "At the same time, the capacity to price those options without coding is the key strength of our product configurator. We've seen a number of bigger companies attempt to do it with a code-driven approach. It doesn't work in this industry."

Important was to ensure customers had control over the system and how products were configured. "They have the capacity to adjust and change the product themselves," he says.

"The system is not in the hands of the IT gurus, it's in the hands of the business administrators."

The product configurator has been modified in recent years to accommodate each new product encountered, such as vertical or roman blinds or awnings.

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

WHEN INSYTE SOFTWARE asked its customers to name the top 10 reasons why they purchased the firm's software, they mentioned that it provides information at their fingertips, improves professionalism in customer communication and includes end-to-end financial integration as well as improving on-time production and reducing errors.

"It's about having a central location for all information," Jenkins says. "Before customers come to us, the

information is held in lead sheets, manually written diaries, in MYOB or Quick Books. It's written on quote sheets and order forms and the information is bound to those physical forms. If you want to know where a customer's job is, you have to look at a piece of paper hanging on a board or sitting on a pile or flowing through a factory."

In contrast, Insyte provides a central location where every customer interaction is recorded including appointments made, quotes given, orders confirmed,

payments taken as well as purchase orders that have flowed through to suppliers as a result of that manufacturing job being secured. "When Mrs Smith rings and asks 'where's my job at?', you can see it went to the factory five days ago and will be completed in two days and you can tell her 'we were about to call you to make a time to install it. Is next Tuesday okay?'"

He also describes financial integration as a huge win for the firm's customers. "Our system captures all the payments customers make,"

he says. Checks are in place to ensure that established business procedures are also followed. "They might have a policy that says they won't go ahead with the job unless they have 50 per cent deposit," he says. "Insyte will prevent operators from going forward with the job unless it has that deposit or the manager has authorised an override." Also integrated into the system is information about suppliers such as purchase orders that have been made, monies owed to them and when orders have been received.

Importantly, Jenkins suggests Insyte enables an improvement in on-time production by providing prompts to remind about actions that are needed. "What drags down the averages is jobs slipping through the cracks, the things that take longer or require follow up from suppliers," he says. "Without the system, companies spend a lot of time thinking through what they've missed. It's a constant fear of business owners in the industry, 'what have I missed?', because they have hundreds of activities to do in a week."

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SUPPORTS COMPANY GROWTH

CUSTOMERS ALSO SAY they purchase Insyte, according to Jenkins, because it supports company growth, increases their marketing capacity, improves sales statistics and improves the quality of life for management and staff because they can leave work knowing they have completed all of the tasks required for that day.

"If they manage multiple geographies, they use Insyte to monitor how the operations are travelling in both geographies," he says. "If they talk about adding sales reps, Insyte assists because it makes people more aware of what they can and can't order. It also gives them increased capacity to manage appointment times and keep statistics on the efficiency and effectiveness of their sales reps."

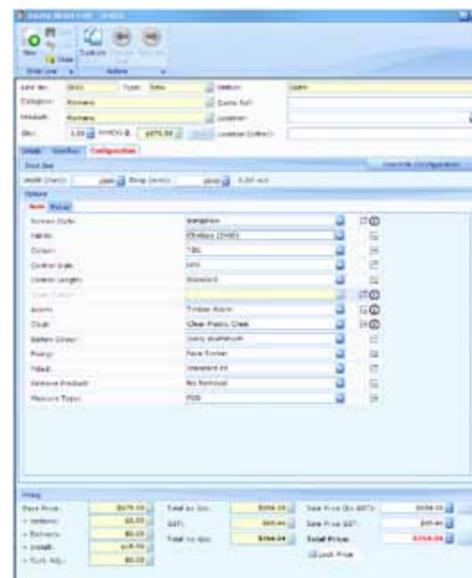
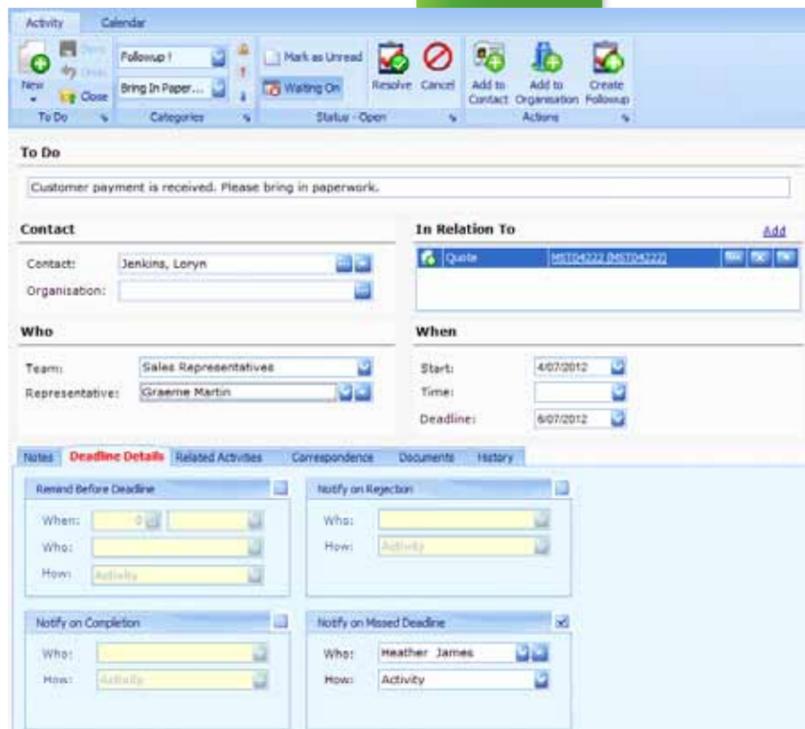
He cites an example where the system showed 30 per cent of reps were strong on securing repeat jobs but down on gaining new leads. This enabled those sales reps to be trained on the tips and techniques that were useful to approach new customers. "Within a month, their sales performance had improved," he says.

GETTING STARTED

INSYTE SOFTWARE KEEPS up to date with the processes used by its customers' businesses to ensure it provides the solutions they seek. "It's quite unlike a shrink wrapped model like MYOB where you don't have any significant interaction with the producer of the product." Jenkins says. "Out product fundamentally supports the business operations of dozens of companies in the industry. That brings with it a need to be very intimately aware of the uniqueness of the various companies we work with, the language they use and how their business operations work."

Setting up a small business with the Insyte system can take about three weeks and includes training, installation and a support period. A medium-sized company could take three months to become established with Insyte, a process that includes a study of the business' operations, defining its business rules, developing the specific work flows and configuration items it requires and then training and transitioning its staff to use the product.

A six-to-nine month project is generally required at enterprise level including an in-depth study of the business and a development of the extensions the customer wants, as well a trial period followed by approval for a full rollout. "The genius of the product development team here is being able to take those specific requirements and turn them into a general piece of software," he says. "No company has a specific customisation just for them. Every company uses the general purpose product. We translate the specific requirements they have into more general features in order to create an increasingly powerful platform for players in the market."



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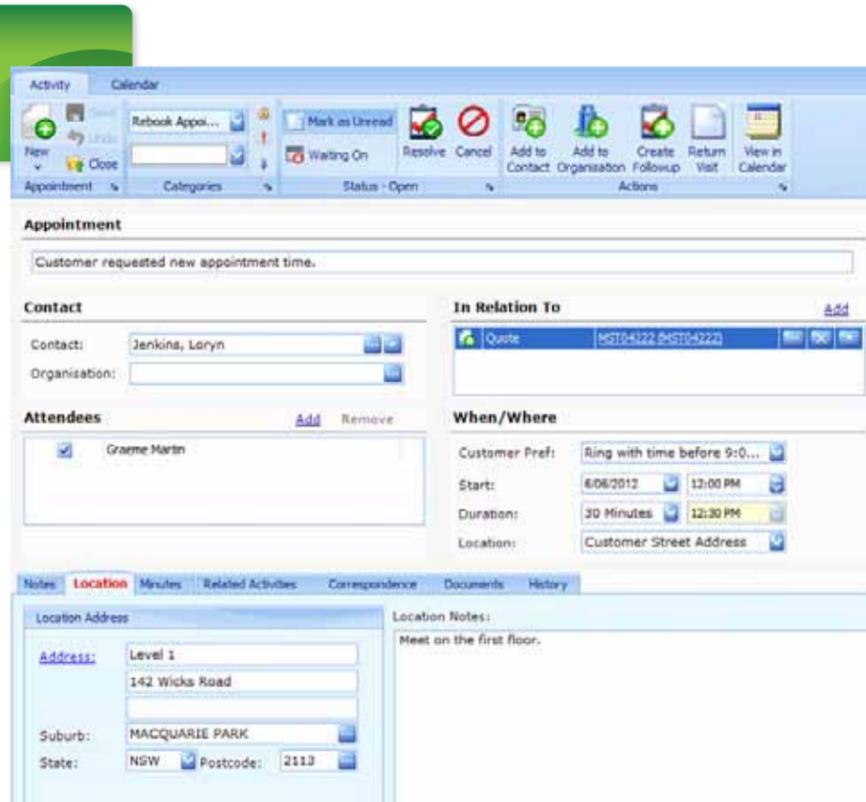
ASPECT FABRICS

**VISION
COMES
TRUE**

JENKINS REMINISCES ABOUT the early days when Insyte worked with the Sydney Blinds & Screens to develop a 10-year vision for an integrated end-to-end system. He claims that vision is being realised this year with the recent release of the firm's tablet solution.

"The vision that you could quote on tablets, wirelessly communicate those orders directly into the office, process everything within one information system, electronically order off suppliers, send your information to the factory and be able to monitor the progress of jobs throughout the factory all from one system is now being realised," he says.

The complexities conquered are more than he imagined existed when these plans were first being discussed in 2003. And as software has evolved over time, he claims small businesses can now access the systems previously only affordable for the largest companies. "I see this period as being the decade of digitisation for the window furnishings industry in Australia," he says.



I SEE THIS PERIOD *as being the decade of digitisation for the WINDOW FURNISHINGS INDUSTRY in Australia.*



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