

Norfolk Marine (Chandlers Ltd) celebrates 10 years of using Encore ERP software to manage front and back office operations

Summary

Norfolk Marine is an award winning chandlery business that has relied on Encore from Anagram Systems to manage day to day operations for more than 10 years. The solution – a fully integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system - was originally implemented to replace time-consuming manual administrative processes. Since Encore was deployed the company has gone from strength to strength and automation has saved the company a significant amount of time and money. Encore is key to every aspect of operations, including retail Point of Sale (PoS), managing web sales, stock control and the reporting that is key to strategic decision making.

Company background

Established in 1984, Norfolk Marine is one of the largest marine chandlers in the UK, offering a range of more than 35,000 products. Norfolk Marine's 18,000 square foot shop is located in Wroxham, near Norwich, and supplies retail consumers and marine industry businesses, servicing the latter via the company's dedicated trade counter and van delivery service.



NORFOLK MARINE

Based in the heart of East Anglia's busy Norfolk Broads, Norfolk Marine supplies its products not only locally and throughout East Anglia but also to a nationwide customer-base via the company's website. The business employs eleven highly experienced staff members who specialise in advising customers and providing expert advice about the company's broad range of products and solutions.

The challenge – time consuming manual administration

Before implementing Encore, Norfolk Marine relied on highly time consuming manual processes. The day to day management system was largely paper based and this meant staff were spending many hours each week focusing on administration. All sales transaction values were calculated manually and invoices were typed out or written by hand. This was also the case for other essential documents including delivery notes and customer records.

Marc Bayliss, Norfolk Marine's Purchasing Manager says: "We were spending hours every week dealing with paperwork. I remember having six inch piles of invoices on my desk that needed to be completed.

It was clear that we needed to look at an alternative system which would reduce administration, enabling us to spend more time focusing on supporting our customers and growing sales."

The Solution – a fully integrated ERP system

Marc decided to investigate computerised systems and shortlisted five potential software solutions including Encore from Anagram Systems.

Encore is a fully integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system which incorporates stock control, sales and purchase order processing, Point of Sale (PoS), reporting and financial management. The system also includes Customer Relationship Management (CRM) functionality with marketing features designed to support lead generation and cross-selling.

Anagram itself is a leading business management software provider with 35 years experience of developing systems for companies across a range of industries, including the marine and chandlery sector.

Marc comments: "Having evaluated five different systems, Encore came out the clear winner. I was particularly impressed with how easy it was to use the system and most importantly, by the breadth and depth of its functionality. We wanted an all-in-one solution which would enable us to manage every aspect of the business now and for many years to come. Encore was the 'one stop shop' we were looking for."

"Cost was another factor for choosing Encore. We wanted to find an economical solution that was also comprehensive in terms of the features we needed, to move on from manual administration. Encore ticked all the boxes for us and choosing to implement the system was one of the best business decisions I have ever made. "

Streamlining sales order processing

Following consultation and project planning with the team at Anagram Systems, Encore was rolled out to the team at Norfolk Marine in 2007. The roll-out included training but the need for this turned out to be minimal.

Marc explains: "We only needed one day of training to help us learn the basics. Encore is highly intuitive and we found it easy to find our way around the system and build our knowledge very quickly, without the need for expensive and time-consuming ongoing training courses. This was important as we wanted to start using the system as quickly as possible."

Encore – which includes Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) functionality – was deployed on the shop's two touch-screen tills, enabling staff to process sales and capture customer information quickly and efficiently. Users also have the ability to look up product information including stock availability instantly, enabling them to deal with customer enquiries immediately.

All sales transactions are recorded in Encore's ledgers and documentation including invoices, order acknowledgements, delivery notes and picking lists can be raised, printed or emailed to customers instantly. Stock level records are updated automatically following each sale.

Sales to credit business customers via Norfolk Marine's trade counter are recorded immediately into the system, despatch notes printed and invoices raised at the end of each month. This runs parallel to sales to consumers who pay at point of sale and are provided with receipts instantly.

Efficient web sales management

Encore is integrated with Norfolk Marine's website which is equipped with shopping cart functionality, enabling customers to purchase products quickly and securely at whatever time is most convenient for them. Marc and his team download customer orders from the website into Encore on a daily basis for processing, picking, packing and despatch.

Key details about each order including customer and product information, in addition to sales values and payment details are automatically captured and recorded in Encore, minimising the need for manual data entry.

Norfolk Marine's website provides visitors with a choice of more than 14,000 products and information about items is published to the site via Encore itself. This means that Marc and the team don't need to enter information once into the Encore and then to the website via a separate content management systems. Again, this saves a substantial amount of data entry time.

Crucially, when Encore and Norfolk Marine's website was first integrated via an add-on module provided by Anagram Systems, Marc was able to import details of the 14,000 products from Encore to the website electronically.

Marc comments: "This has saved us hundreds of man-hours. In fact, keying product information into the website manually would have been practically impossible. Using Encore, we achieved everything in a matter of hours and this translated into significant cost savings.

Encore integrates with a range of different shopping cart platforms including Magento which is widely used and supported by web developers. In 2017 Norfolk Marine will be updating the system to enable Encore to be integrated with a Magento 2 based website, offering a much improved experience for the web customer and also offering B2B functionality for their Trade customers. This will also enable multiple users to access and update the company's website concurrently using Encore, further helping reduce administration time.

Managing inbound and outbound deliveries

Marc and the team are reliant on Encore's advanced stock control functionality which is essential for managing in-bound and out-bound deliveries.

Customer orders are despatched for delivery on a daily basis and Encore is used to produce despatch notes which sometimes list more than 150 lines of products. Producing notes manually would take hours to

complete, however, Encore enables users to collate and print order information in minutes.

All goods are checked out prior to despatch using barcode scanners linked to Encore. This minimises the amount of time it takes to complete the procedure. Deliveries to Norfolk Marine are managed in a similar way. Goods are scanned as they arrive and this information immediately appears in Encore alongside stock numbers.

Inventory management and reporting

Marc also praises Encore's advanced inventory management reporting functionality which he relies on to make key purchasing decisions.

He says: "Chandlery businesses differ from other types of retailers in that we hold far greater quantities of stock than other types of retailers. The shelf-life of a product tends to be longer too. I need to analyse trends such as seasonal purchasing patterns to identify fast moving product lines and items that are slow to sell."

"Using Encore, I have created a number of customised reports which I run each month to provide us with the information we need to decide what we need to purchase and when. The ease with which reports can be customised in Encore is a major benefit to us and as a result, reports that would otherwise take days to prepare can be completed in hours. I'm always surprised to speak with people who use software with inflexible reporting functionality."

Highly recommended

Marc has been so impressed with Encore and the business advantage Norfolk Marine have gained as a result of using the system that he has recommended Anagram Systems to many people in the marine and other business sectors.

He concludes: "Encore itself is excellent and the support I've received over the years has been superb. I've got to know many people on the support team over the years and this relationship continues to be beneficial to us in terms of helping us make the most of the systems. I would recommend Encore and Anagram Systems to any business."