

Automail sparks annual cost savings for fuse manufacturer

One of the first ever customers of a business solutions provider over 30 years old is still reporting savings of up to £20,000 a year after investing in scalable technology, which has contributed to its overall business growth.

Lawson Fuses, which specialises in the design, development and manufacture of HRC low voltage fuses, is still reporting significant cost savings as a result of an advanced Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system implemented by K3 Syspro over 27 years ago. The company, which is a power user of SYSPRO ERP, operates a full suite of modules including manufacturing and accounting applications, and has continually grown its system with the help of K3 Syspro over the past few decades. A recent investment in K3 Syspro's email automation system, AutoMail, which integrates with the company's SYSPRO application has enhanced the company's ERP investment further, and is resulting in cost savings of up to £20,000 a year.

Ken Jordan, from Lawson Fuses explains: "We have long been a user of K3 Syspro's software and recently upgraded our business critical systems to SYSPRO 6.1 in 2012. This gave us the ability to automate our invoicing and sales processes, which were previously quite labour intensive."



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At a glance

Company

Lawson Fuses

Industry sector

Manufacturing & Distribution

- Fuses

SIC Code

27120

- Manufacture of electricity distribution apparel

Number of employees :

60+

The challenge

- Enhance company's ERP investment further
- Reduce labour intensive invoicing and sales processes
- Remove need to manually file and issue monthly statements

Solution & services

- SYSPRO ERP
- Automail

The benefits

- Significant cost savings of up to £20,000 a year through Automail
- Automate invoicing and sales processes
- Emailing statements reduces time, postage and printing costs
- Improved customer data and relationships

(continued)

"We generate over 12,000 invoices each year, which are sent to various areas of the UK by post. By emailing these to customers instead of putting time and resource into printing, packaging and posting, we are saving around £500 a month on postage costs alone. Instead of having to manually file and issue monthly statements, we have switched our payment terms to enable our customers to pay us directly by bank transfer, which is calculated and carried over by Automail, to each individual invoice. We have worked out that this is saving us a further £2,500 a year on additional expenses."

AutoMail uses a simple text script or PDF report to send emails with sophisticated PDF attachments to every customer in Lawson Fuses' database, enabling rapid deployment of email facilities for SYSPRO. It comprises a report service which monitors a directory for PDF reports, such as file invoices generated by Crystal Reports, and passes this report using defined job separator pages. This splits the report into individual PDF documents to be emailed using the information in the job separator. For Lawson Fuses, this enables the company to email the individual invoices contained in the file to the relevant customer, significantly speeding up and streamlining the company's invoicing processes.

This is not only helping Lawson Fuses to save considerable time and money, but the transfer to AutoMail has also been embraced by the company's customers, who have long sought this sort of automated payment system.



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Ken Jordan reveals: *"We previously ran our invoicing processes on a dot matrix platform using printed stationery methods. What we found after a number of years, was that 94% of our customers kept coming back to us and requesting the same invoice information electronically, so that they could file it electronically within their own business systems, so AutoMail has provided benefits to our customers as well as to ourselves."*

After utilising AutoMail to streamline its invoicing processes, Lawson Fuses began to explore other ways the system could cut further costs and make additional efficiencies throughout the business. Due to its flexibility and seamless integration capabilities, AutoMail is a resource that can be used in multiple areas of a business together with the functionality of SYSPRO ERP. It has the potential to enable companies that have typically high print, postage and stationary costs, to make significant savings in money, time, and efficiency, not to mention providing significant environmental benefits as well.

Ken Jordan explains how he began to utilise AutoMail for other areas of the business. *"After we had used AutoMail to streamline our invoicing processes for a year, I began to see its potential and started trialing it in other areas of the business. We had a small price increase recently and normally we would either re-run our existing product brochures with updated information, or create a new price list."*

"Instead of putting a lot of time into money into creating, publishing, printing and distributing a new eight-page price list for customers, we designed the price list using AutoMail. We were then able to just mail this out directly to over 2,000 customers. If you calculate that these would have cost approximately £1.50 to print and post per document that is a cost saving of £3,000."

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And it's not just cost savings that AutoMail delivers to users. It also has the capability to clean customer data. Lawson Fuses has thousands of customers all over the country who have purchased from the company at various different times since its conception in 1938. However, only a portion of these customers are considered active and placing regular orders with the company. The rest are lapsed and present rich sales opportunities for the company.

Utilising Crystal Reports, the team at Lawson Fuses were able to analyse all customer data and then AutoMail a standard letter to all lapsed customers, letting them know of any current special offers or new products added to the company's product catalogue. By entering a date in the system, the company identified all customers that had not placed an order prior to that particular date and then AutoMailed them in order to keep the customer relationship strong. This has led to an upturn in lapsed customers returning to the company.

Ken Jordan explains: *"We spent a lot of time collating all of the email addresses for our customers and then doing very little with the data. For a business as old as ours, it is important that you retain strong relationships with all of your customers and AutoMail has enabled us to really develop customer relations with some of our oldest customers, who had previously lapsed their spending with us. Recent innovations have included using Automail to facilitate a customer satisfaction survey."*

The benefits that Lawson Fuses is experiencing from AutoMail are clear, but 27 years is a long time to have a relationship with a company and a lot can happen in that period. When Lawson Fuses originally purchased its business critical application from K3 Syspro, the company was a smaller entity than it is today when it was trading as McGuffie Brunton; only becoming K3 Syspro following a period of acquisition in 2007. The risk with any acquisition as a company grows, is that the customer service clients received when it was a smaller firm would be compromised but for Lawson Fuses it was the opposite that happened.

"We were apprehensive when we heard that McGuffie Brunton was being acquired by K3 Business Technology as you would if any of your suppliers underwent an acquisition and rapidly grew. But we needn't have been. McGuffie Brunton took all their existing staff with them to K3 Syspro, so all the

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relationships we had built with them remained in place. The customer service we receive from them has not been affected and even though I rarely have to call the helpdesk because AutoMail and SYSPRO are so intuitive, when we do, we always get a friendly voice at the end of the phone and our account manager is always available when we need her."

The long relationship between Lawson Fuses and K3 Syspro continues to flourish and is a shining example for other UK businesses. The company recently migrated its business systems away from the XP operating system earlier this year and once again, K3 Syspro was on hand to assist with the move.

Ken Lawson concludes: *"I remember that K3 Syspro was so useful during our XP migration that I even sent their helpdesk a complimentary email to thank them for their support. What is really great for us is the fact that not only do K3 Syspro applications help us to reduce costs as a business but they are always available to provide us with technical support and updates which has invaluable to us over a number of years."*

