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CASE STUDY

How R&S Grating transformed its business with cloud expertise from Ricoh Australia and rhipe

Company size: 20+

Industry: Manufacturing

The Challenge

Move to cloud overcomes challenging operating conditions

R&S Grating is a family-owned manufacturer established in 1974 that supplies and installs trench and grating systems to civil engineering projects all over Melbourne.

Faced with increasing challenges to operating conditions during the global pandemic, R&S Grating founders Tim and James Hockham realised their legacy enterprise resource planning system was holding the business back. They needed additional expertise to implement a new solution, so R&S Grating engaged channel partners Ricoh Australia and rhipe to deliver a modern SaaS-based solution, based on Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

Over 100 containers of manufactured products are shipped by R&S Grating every year. When supply chains faltered and shipping costs more than quadrupled during the global pandemic, R&S Grating was challenged by soaring operational costs and disconnected systems.

R&S Grating's aging ERP system did not provide the stock visibility, logistics management, fleet management or data insight needed to identify cost efficiency countermeasures. The rustic accounting system forced the creation of numerous manual workarounds (and subsequent errors), including the use of various disconnected spreadsheets to track stock levels, deliveries, and other mission critical decisions.

Aging infrastructure and poor VPN connectivity hindered the flow of information between teams in R&S Grating, and this challenge was further compounded by the remote working conditions imposed during the pandemic.

The knock-on effect of these challenges was significant. IT and administrative overheads were spiked by increased system management and constant reconciliation of disparate data sources. Manual management of numerous spreadsheets increased the risk of errors in order handling and shipping processes, whilst the absence of integrated tracking left the business unable to verify the status of customer deliveries.

For R&S Grating, accurate order handling and meeting shipping windows is essential. Delayed shipments resulted in substantial fees to private couriers to ensure on-time delivery. Whilst using private couriers ensured R&S Grating met its obligations to customers, it also directly impacted profitability.

Reporting out of the legacy ERP system was slow, meaning R&S Grating was constantly working with aged and potentially inaccurate information rather than making decisions based on a real-time view of the business.

> **Because the ERP was just not capable of properly tracking our stock, there were about five different, non-connected areas you needed to go to if you wanted to follow an order all the way through the system. Each time data moved from one area to another, there was manual work and a chance for a mistake.**
>
> – Tim Hockham, Product Development Manager R&S Grating.

The Need

A single source of truth

R&S Grating knew its systems needed to change and that it was time to invest in a long-term solution.

To address its business challenges, reduce risk and overcome productivity barriers, R&S Grating needed:

- A modern system capable of supporting access and collaboration across different teams and functions
- End-to-end visibility and tracking of stock holdings, sales orders, and shipments
- Integration with third party proof of delivery software for fleet management and verification of deliveries
- Improved supply chain management
- Simple integration of financials and rapid reporting for a near real-time view of activity
- Ability to realise the true cost of goods including importing via sea freight
- Improved use of data to inform business decisioning
- Cost controls on associated hardware, such as database servers
- Confidence its IT partners could implement remotely, as the project timetable would land delivery in the middle of tough COVID-19 lockdown conditions in Melbourne.

The Solution

Modernising Australian Manufacturing with a SaaS ERP

The project team in R&S Grating was aware that ERP migrations can be challenging. Selecting a new solution and the right partners to deliver were subject to an extensive evaluation period.

"One of the systems we looked at claimed to integrate well with Power BI and other Microsoft offerings, but they had an API for this and an API for that," said Tim Hockham. "I wanted something where we could push a button and it would shoot out into Excel."

Ricoh Australia and rhipe nailed the brief with their proposed solution; an Australian cloud-based ERP system built on the rock-solid foundations of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and developed to comply with the stringent financial and accounting standards of the local market.

Enhanced modern functionality would provide near real-time visibility and management over warehouse inventory, sales orders, manufacturing, quality assurance and stock movements. The solution provided ease of integration with R&S Grating's preferred proof-of-delivery software, ensuring fleet and customer deliveries were accurately tracked. Modern payroll and finance capabilities would provide faster, more accurate insights back into the business.

Ricoh Australia leveraged its expertise in Microsoft Power Platform to include ERP system integration with Microsoft Power BI for data visualisation, dashboards and rapid reporting.

Secured and delivered in Microsoft Azure, the new solution provided anywhere, anytime system access for all users. The cloud-based SaaS solution guaranteed uptime and utilisation of the Microsoft Power Platform for delivery of additional business requirements.

> It's all about taking a customer-centric approach. If the customer has certain challenges and they're not within our core, there's no point for us trying to resolve it; we're better off partnering with someone that has those specific skills..
>
> – Doris Marr, Digital Automation Advisor, Ricoh Australia

The proposed project delivery approach would see Ricoh Australia lean its expertise into the business intelligence and process automation components and bring rhipe to the table for the ERP implementation.

Ricoh Australia selected rhipe as its partner due to a 100% success rate in delivering pre-configured, fixed scope, fixed time Business Central implementations using its proprietary SmartStart methodology.

rhipe SmartStart implementations are best practice driven and use as much Out-of-the-Box functionality as possible. Pre-configured environments eliminate the costs attracted to projects through lengthy, detailed scoping and analysis phase and ensure rapid delivery without scope creep.

rhipe's indirect channel model and true 'through partner' approach assured Ricoh Australia of no competitive encroachment on its relationship with R&S Grating. Risk was further minimised for Ricoh Australia with a well-defined rhipe Services Agreement, which allowed for the cost of implementation to be financed.

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The Results

From crisis to cloud innovation

Adopting an industry-standard platform helped R&S Grating mitigate the risks of a major platform migration, improving performance and usability while helping R&S Grating to adopt industry best practices encapsulated in the software.

Tim Hockham and the team took the advice of Ricoh Australia and rhipe by changing R&S Grating's business processes to match the out-of-the-box experience. This helped ensure success of the transition to Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and gave the added benefits of seeing how projects can be delivered remotely.

Using Microsoft Teams to deliver Business Central was a critical element for success for R&S Grating. "Moving to cloud-based systems made that a lot easier and has given us the realisation that often we were not following best practice, in our business processes", notes Tim.

With its new ERP system in place, R&S Grating has taken a major step forward on best practice. The business has consolidated its data management, improved inventory and order tracking, and its Power BI interface has opened new windows into the company's day-to-day operations. Management dashboards provide realtime visibility of order status, order handling, and even the movement of seaborne containers through the supply chain.

"We have much larger competitors out there which are not able to offer the same level of service that we are now able to offer thanks to Business Central and the Power Platform," said Tim Hockham.



Empowering a major step forward on industry best practice

From the outset of the project, R&S Grating had full transparency on the roles and responsibilities of each team and was able to engage with both Ricoh and rhipe directly as needed. Tim Hockham describes the partners as "extremely accessible", something that was essential to efficient project communications and ensuring clear lines of accountability.

Implementation commenced in July 2021, just as Melbourne rolled into more than three months of hard COVID-19 lockdowns and tough workplace restrictions. It was here that Ricoh Australia and rhipe brought their remote project delivery expertise to the fore.

Despite adverse conditions, migration to the new system and go-live was completed within only five months.

Shared vision, open collaboration and robust remote project practices between the in-house project team, Power BI leads at Ricoh and the Business Central experts at rhipe, allowed project issues and opportunities to be identified, communicated, and acted upon quickly.

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A future ready business system

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central has already enabled seamless integration with third-party solutions like the Track-POD proof of delivery system. R&S Grating has almost completed its next project to release a new Configure Price Quote "CPQ" solution tightly integrated into Dynamics 365 Business Central. This will allow end customers to order bespoke products to specific dimensions, enable customer selfservice and order placement.

> It's already saving a lot of time. This is something that would have been worked out manually before, grabbing the data and putting it together in Excel. It might have taken half an hour to do a report – and now we just click the 'refresh data' button and it's there.
>
> – Tim Hockham, Product Development Manager, R&S Grating

If you already have an opportunity in mind, or you need help to identify and pitch for an ERP opportunity, start a conversation with us today.

Book a meeting today!

Ricoh Australia selected rhipe due to its 100% success rate in delivering Business Central implementations

With its new Business Central system in place, R&S Grating has taken a major step forward in its data & inventory management, order and supply chain management

The new system has set R&S Grating ready for business expansion, improving customer experience with customer self-service and bespoke product ordering