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Reinventing Big Blue Digital
How they increased their revenue by almost 50%

At first glance, Australian-based cloud system consultants Big Blue Digital (formerly Bosweb Systems) appeared to be thriving. By 2013, the team had developed over 600 websites and had created over 100 custom internet applications. With over 12 years of experience in the industry, the team (which had started out of a home office in 2000) were strong players in website development, web applications, online communication and content management systems. However, when CEO Brendon O'Sullivan was going through their financial statements, things weren't adding up - while they were busier than ever, profits at the end of the quarter weren't where they should have been. "We were losing money on untracked billable hours, and I had no way of seeing where the time was being spent," admitted Brendon. In addition to leaking the valuable time of their professional team, the business was plagued by inefficiencies caused by using bloated, clunky and poor-fitting business management software.

"Apart from Microsoft Dynamics CRM, we were using Excel spreadsheets, and the excessive administrative burden it created was just ridiculous - it just wasn't working for our business anymore," Brendon said.

Their ineffective tools led to delays in billing, which were hurting their cash flow. "Historically, we got down to as bad as 60-plus days in a billing cycle, which is pretty bad from a cashflow perspective. Our invoices would be sent too late and paid too late - everything we were doing was too late!" The result of their antiquated tools was a poisonous combination of chaotic workflow, untracked time, and overdue payments - not to mention that it was taking the most senior people in the business dozens of hours to do billing each month, people who could have been doing much more profitable, valuable and enjoyable work.

Challenge:
Tens of thousands of dollars a month in hours 'leaking' out of the business with no visibility; monthly invoicing taking weeks and severely impacting cashflow; multiple disconnected systems making it hard for staff to be productive and management to run the business.

Solution:
Implement Accelo to give a single, integrated platform to manage the business, giving full visibility into workloads and time spent and streamlining invoicing, billing and payment cycles to improve cashflow.

Results:
Accelo allowed Big Blue Digital to get paid 3x faster, increased their revenue by almost 50% by cutting back on leaked time overhead from 36% to 62%, and empowered the team to scale the business with confidence.

A Struggling Team Sees a Chance to Move Beyond Their Old Systems

Big Blue Digital's challenge was made more complex by their long-term partnership with Microsoft, which gave them incentives to try and use Dynamics to run their business. The perks of being a partner, along with their long-term expertise in the software and time sunk trying to make it work for the business made transitioning to a new platform difficult on a financial and emotional level. "The whole reason we made such a necessary change was because it was time for us to improve the business efficiency and workflow."

The decision to implement Accelo also came with the decision to make changes to their other antiquated technology and embrace the cloud. They traded Microsoft Dynamics CRM for Accelo, started using Google Apps instead of Exchange, and swapped out QuickBooks for Xero. As Brendon put it, "... when we saw what Accelo could do for us as a complete solution - it just made sense."

From Manual to Automated

One of the biggest challenges Brendon faced was training his team to start tracking their time, which for the industry was hardly unusual. Coping with a change in behavior was difficult, and it took time for everyone to understand and acknowledge the importance of time tracking. What facilitated the transition for Brendon and his team was Accelo's automated suggested time inputs for various projects. As Brendon discovered, "By taking the pain out of tracking our time with automation and real-time visibility, Accelo has really made it easy for my entire team." He continued by adding, "It has also given me the insight I needed

to expose areas of inefficiencies amongst my staff or areas where they were not tracking their time." With Accelo's automated time tracking feature, it was unsurprising that Brendon was able to go from 36% of worked hours billable in November 2013 to 62% of hours tracked and billable in November 2014. Given professional service businesses spend more than half of their revenue on labor costs, almost doubling their revenue from the costs already being incurred through payroll had dramatic effects on profitability. "Our goal is to get to 75% productivity, and we now have the tool to help us get there." said Brendon.

The Way Forward for Big Blue Digital

Fast-forward to today, and the team at Big Blue Digital is booming. Thanks to Accelo, they can track their time and

maximize their billable hours. "With Accelo, I know exactly how much we were losing every month. There was no sugar-coating it: when I broke it down, it came out to around $30-50K a month in untracked billable hours." The timesheet reports in Accelo add an element of transparency by allowing the entire team to see who is tracking their hours and who is not. "The timesheet report is probably without a doubt my absolute favorite screen. I love being able to see how productive the team is and it allows me to easily perform my analysis," said Brendon.

In addition to saving time on administrative tasks like time tracking, Accelo has made it easy for the Big Blue Digital team to streamline and improve their workflow. In his role, Brendon is able to spend more time selling and less time on paperwork.

Better With Streamlined Invoicing

Beyond providing a solution to track their time and streamline their workflow, the team at Big Blue Digital have set up triggered messages for all their upcoming invoices. This makes it easy for them to automatically release upcoming invoices up to three months in advance (while giving their clients plenty of time to review and pay the invoice). Brendon added, "With Accelo, we managed to go from a 60-day invoice cycle down to a 18-day invoice cycle. We reduced it by 70%, and I am pretty happy about that."

Ever since Big Blue Digital adopted Accelo, they have made significant changes to their business model. "It empowered us to create a whole new revenue stream. Now, we have the tools we need to go after the larger digital service contracts," remarks Brendon. There is no question that Accelo has also enabled his team to easily collaborate with their clients. "The client portal provides the transparency our clients need to view the work that is being done, to track email correspondence, to review invoices, and to understand internal conversations around the work we do for them."

Brendon recognizes Accelo's ability to provide a comprehensive range of solutions for his team, and has started spreading the word to his clients, "It has been two years since we started using Accelo and we are so in love with the product that we are now reseller partners and are actively implementing it for our clients."