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Greg Switala, Chief Financial Officer, Mitchell Services
Mitchell Services
Unearthing increased performance to support growth

Mitchell Services Limited (ASX code: MSV) provides both underground and surface drilling services to the exploration, mining and energy industries – making it one of the most diverse businesses in this sector. Based in Brisbane, Australia, the company has a history stretching back nearly 50 years and a client portfolio that includes BHP, Evolution Mining, South 32, Anglo-American, Peabody Energy and Glencore.

Mitchell Services has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years. In 2014, the business had an operating rig count of 8 rigs, 80 employees and a turnover of $A15 million for the financial year (FY). In 2018, the business expanded to an operating rig count of 45 rigs, more than 350 employees and a nearly fivefold increase in turnover to over $72 million.

Chief Financial Officer, Greg Switala said, “Our rapid growth rate, while fantastic for the business, added new demands on our operations. It was clear that our existing systems and processes were not geared to meet these new requirements.”

Michelle Pyers, Group Financial Controller, explains the challenge, “We had five stand-alone systems for each of our business functions and as there was no integration between them, the same data had to be entered more than once. Some applications were also extremely slow and simply couldn’t handle the increased data we had. We also used a multitude of spreadsheets and updating these was a time consuming, manual process. The additional challenge with spreadsheets is the high potential for errors so we spent several hours checking and re-checking.”

One way to address the increased workload was to recruit additional administrative and support staff however, given the cyclical nature of the mining industry, this was not the preferred option.

“As a business, Mitchell Services is committed to leveraging innovative technology to increase our capabilities. This strategy makes us flexible, allowing us to respond rapidly to fluctuating demand which is a significant competitive advantage in our industry,” said Mr Switala.

As a result Mitchell Services decided to replace its disparate business systems.

Unparalleled attention to detail

Mr Switala said, “One of the reasons we chose Pronto Software was the confidence the team instilled in us. Implementing an ERP solution is not an easy task. Pronto Software took the time to visit our site and was the only software vendor that offered us a two-day pre-sales workshop to ensure we accurately mapped out the scope of the project and a plan of action.”

“Ultimately Pronto Software proved that their ERP solution, Pronto Xi, had the functionality we needed such as payroll, could integrate with the specialist pieces of software we already had – and the cost was at a reasonable level for our business. Another big advantage was that they were an Australian business with a local support team,” Mr Switala added.

The implementation process was complex and Pronto Software’s project management expertise was of crucial importance.

Ms Pyers said, “The Pronto Software Implementation Methodology helped ensure we stayed within our set timeline and budget parameters.”

Mitchell Services also chose to use Pronto Cloud’s hosted offering, as opposed to an on-premises solution to benefit from scalability and also enable greater mobility for employees.

“Our business is remote, and we did not want our ERP to only be available in head office,” said Ms Pyers. “We wanted to create and process work orders for field staff and allow them to access and update the system when they were on site.”

Greater productivity boosts performance

The move to Pronto Xi has provided numerous advantages including reducing the time taken to complete certain business processes from days – to hours.

“With Pronto Xi we can process payroll for over double the number of employees in the same, if not less, time than before. We’ve also tripled the number of complex sales orders we process – and critically we can now track all the data contained in them. And the data is right, no more keying errors,” Ms Pyers said.

The amount of paper around the office has decreased with the introduction of electronic workflows – this is big advantage for a business with distributed operations and has reduced errors.
Ms Pyers said, “The Pronto Xi Project Costing module enables us to see where we can save and improve. We can track our purchasing throughout the supply chain process to ensure that spend is kept to budgeted levels.”

Another important consideration was improving uptime.

“With Pronto Xi pre-starts and defect reports are captured electronically from site. Illustrating the performance benefits is the fact that our number of monthly pre-starts across the organisation have increased from approximately 1,800 per month in 2016 to nearly 6,000 – and we’ve done all this with just the one central asset compliance officer,” said Mr Switala.

“With the Inventory module, we can plan and collate our critical spares to minimise downtime for our equipment. The Pronto Xi Plant Maintenance module allows us to track our requirements and ensure that all our gear is compliant, safe and working,” added Mr Switala.

Mitchell Services’ new integrated billing and timesheet system allows data, including daily drill logs, to be captured at site and through an import function, both payroll and client billing is generated automatically.

Mr Switala explained, “In 2016 we processed about 2,500 timesheets per month – now it’s about 8,500 every month. In the same time our daily drill logs have tripled to 1,500 each month – compared to under 500. We do all this with just one operational payroll officer and two revenue officers – with Pronto Xi it’s always efficient and on time.”

“I think that the biggest testament to our implementation came during our recent acquisition of another drilling business. We were able to fully integrate this new addition to our Pronto Xi system and we did so internally, without the need for a Pronto consultant to assist,” said Mr Switala.

Over the first twelve months of their Pronto Xi implementation Mitchell Services already saw large improvements in the quality of data they were able to gather.

“We can now leverage the data we have to build some great reports and dashboards and are consulting with business leaders to explore how we can make their jobs easier. As a business, we have been thoroughly impressed by what Pronto Xi has delivered. I am eager to see what else we can achieve together to further improve our ROI,” said Mr Switala.

Mitchell Services

+ Surface and underground drilling services provider with fifty-year history
+ Over 350 employees
+ Turnover of over $A72 million in financial year 2018

Michelle Pyers, Group Financial Controller, Mitchell Services

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We listened to the team at Mitchell Services to understand its unique software integration and data processing requirements.

We adapted Pronto Xi to enable seamless integration with existing applications, providing a single source of truth.

We revealed a solution that has allowed Mitchell Services to grow rapidly and increase its profitability.

“The Pronto Xi Plant Maintenance module allows us to track our requirements and ensure that all our gear is compliant, safe and working.”

Greg Switala,
Chief Financial Officer, Mitchell Services

Pronto Xi
Tailor-made business software solutions.

Pronto Software has been developing award-winning business management software for 40 years. With in-built intelligence, flexibility and an easy-to-use interface, its flagship product, Pronto Xi, enables users to discover rich business insights.

Pronto believes in the power of actively listening to clients, adapting our product to meet their needs and finally revealing the best solution. It’s how we continually surpass client expectations, delivering moments of utter surprise and delight.