

Engineering firm cleans up using Act!

act!™

While Act! is a powerful CRM solution straight out of the box, it wasn't until Michael Williams Engineering Ltd, the manufacturer of the Big Brute industrial vacuum cleaners, got support from an Act! Certified Consultant that they really found out how it could transform the way they did business.



“My father phoned me one day back in 2001”, recalls James Williams, “asking if I knew of any software that would save his sales team at Michael Williams Engineering Ltd having to write notes about customer calls and call back reminders on bits of paper that kept getting lost.”

James didn't. But, quite by chance, he spotted Act! on a shelf in PC World soon after. He thought “it might do the job” and bought a copy.

“There's no way we would have been able to produce the thousands of quotes we have over the last few years doing things the old way”

James Williams
Director

The sales team took to it immediately. Five more copies were quickly bought and networked together using an old Windows® computer.

No more having to rely on handwritten notes, rewriting orders or forgetting to return calls at the right time. And when a customer phoned, no one had to rummage through someone else's paperwork if they weren't there.

When James joined the family firm a few years later, the sales staff were still more than happy with Act!. So too were the management team, as not only were customers getting a better service, but production scheduling had also improved because they knew where business was coming from and when.



“We thought we were using Act! to the full,” says James. “Then we had an Act! Certified Consultant come in. That opened everyone’s eyes to what was possible. Straightaway, for instance, we realised we weren’t using Opportunities to their full potential to manage leads. After some training, we immediately went to another level.”

Act! helps international expansion

The business expanded, selling more and more of its Big Brute industrial vacuum cleaners to customers not just in the UK, but also to other parts of Europe, and as far afield as Australia and New Zealand.

“Then Jenny Upson of Project Support (another ACC) came in to reconfigure Act! for us,” says James. “She revolutionised things even more. She introduced us to Seamless Opportunities (an Act! add-on), which reinvented the way we prepared quotes. Until then, we’d been using Microsoft® Word, but there was no consistent style or corporate feel, and sometimes even the figures were wrong.

“With Seamless Opportunities, suddenly we were producing better looking quotes, faster and more accurately. There’s no way we would have been able to produce the thousands we have over the last few years doing things the old way.”

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Jenny also helped them to set up web access, so their sales demonstrator could use a laptop and 4G dongle to upload and access notes while in the field or working from home. This meant that the team back at Michael Williams Engineering Ltd’s offices in Cambridge had information they would otherwise have had to wait days for.

Has the company ever thought about using another CRM? James admits to contemplating a move to Sage CRM, to coordinate with their Sage 200 ERP system.

“But it was far too complicated. It might be OK for a massive multinational,” says James, “but Act is much better for a company like us.”

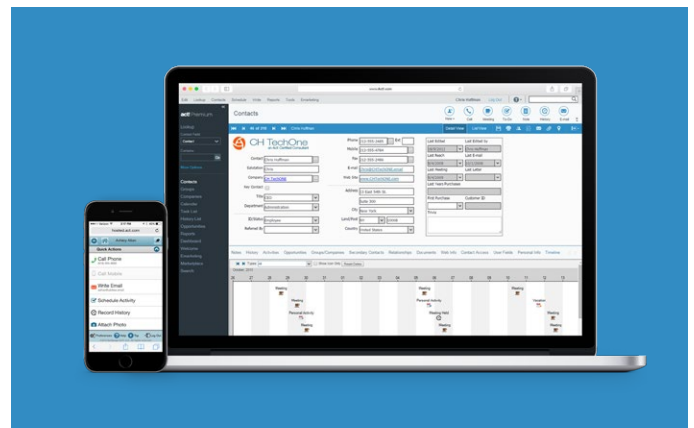
In fact, knowing what Act! can do, Michael Williams Engineering Ltd has persuaded its Big Brute distributors in Australia and New Zealand to start using it too, passing on their knowledge and helping customise the software.

New email marketing push

Michael Williams Engineering Ltd is now exporting the Big Brute industrial vacuum cleaners to the US and Canada under the name of “Big Mike” vacuum cleaners. The company is taking on a new marketing executive and an external marketing advisor to help build their brand awareness throughout the year. And Act! will play an important role in this by making sure the information that is collected is fully used for marketing activities.

They will also be using Act! emarketing more over the next 12 months. They've already used it to get customer feedback about the company's 'Bangalore Bird Scarer'. Now in its 40th year of production, this is one of their agricultural products which they were thinking of redeveloping to make it even better. The overwhelmingly positive response of farming customers cemented their decision. An updated version will go into production later this year.

It seems the moral of this story is that even if you have been using it for some time, Act! is probably more powerful than you think – you just may need a helping hand to unlock it.



Results

- Thanks to Act!, gone are the days where the sales staff was having to rely on handwritten notes, rewriting orders or forgetting to return calls at the right time.
- Not only do customers get a better service, but production scheduling has also improved because the management team knows where business is coming from and when.
- Since introducing Seamless Opportunities (an Act! add-on), Michael Williams Engineering Ltd produces better looking quotes, faster and more accurately.

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