



Exceptional Service through Exceptional Cost Control

Alan Johnson Associates, Chartered Architects, prides itself on its close connections to its diverse client base. In this case study, we see how this growing practice uses Sage Coretime to increase its customer service levels, while also helping them to closely monitor the bottom line.

Established in 1979, Coventry-based Alan Johnson Associates Chartered Architects have built a solid reputation in a number of different sectors with particular expertise in master-planning, commercial, large-scale distribution, industrial, retail, and more recently, residential development. Employing 26 staff as well as three partners, this dynamic firm of architects has a focused philosophy: by working closely with their clients in order to understand their real needs, they will deliver a solution that best serves the true requirements of those clients.

This philosophy extends not only through their design, planning, and customer service capabilities, but also into their administration, cost control, and accounting functions.

Mary Corrigan, the firm's Financial Controller, recognises the value that such a philosophy provides. "The relationship between Alan Johnson Associates and its clients is one of mutual professional trust," she states. "Our clients expect us to provide exceptional capabilities at an agreed budget. On the other hand, our firm expects to be paid for agreed schedules of work that have been carried out."

"As Financial Controller, my mission is to ensure financial accuracy. We must closely monitor our costs for every project. In this manner, we are able to demonstrate to our clients the exact work that has been carried out by us on any particular project, and also bring best practice financial control to the firm in order to nurture profitability."

"Through such financial controls, we protect the best interests both for our clients and our firm."

Alan Johnson Associates uses Sage Coretime to provide these financial controls.

Tracking and Managing Time, Made Easy

Sage Coretime is a powerful and easy to use time recording and project management software solution that enables users to track all costs relevant to specific projects. Users can easily record time spent on any project, as well as relevant third party expenses, while also maintaining a record of activities carried out during specific project phases.

Instant data availability allows for accurate invoicing, while also yielding a comprehensive management capability that provides the firm's partners with an instant overview of any project's costs, resource deployment, and activity levels.

In this manner, Sage Coretime not only acts as a comprehensive cost control system, but also provides managers with a detailed history of any given project.

"Except for two people, all members of our staff use Sage Coretime on an ongoing basis," Mary explains. "Because the system is so easy to use, Alan Johnson staff can quickly enter relevant time into the system, as well as other project details. This data becomes a permanent record within the firm which not only allows us to accurately invoice out both time and third party costs, but also provides a detailed record of activities carried out for any project."

Comprehensive time and activity details held by Sage Coretime allow Alan Johnson staff to serve their clients even better. Coretime enables managers to quickly determine not only the number of hours spent by all staff on particular projects, but also drill down to determine precisely which staff members are involved in any project, and what they accomplished on any particular project phase.

These capabilities allow Sage Coretime users to develop comprehensive reports that demonstrate to clients exactly how staff has been deployed to accomplish specific project objectives, and what costs have been incurred to accomplish those objectives.

Activity reporting enables Sage Coretime users to also deploy staff more effectively and to also communicate levels of service (including project hours spent, staff deployment, and specific activities carried out) to clients on an almost real-time basis.

Sage Coretime therefore provides a powerful time tracking and project management solution that facilitates best practice management capabilities, while also facilitating strong customer relationships and accurate financial controls.

Efficiency for Profitability

Due to its accurate time recording processes, Sage Coretime enables Mary to invoice accurately, while also allowing her to closely monitor the profitability of any project.

"Because this software accurately tracks all hours spent on any particular project, as well as relevant third party costs, I find that the invoicing and budget tracking process is efficient and accurate," Mary states. "At the end of a period, I can quickly print out a report on specific projects. This provides me with the number of hours spent during that period as well as any expenses that were incurred."

"I then assign the relevant hourly rate to time costs incurred in order to determine the invoice amount. Using this information, together with recorded expenses incurred on specific projects, we are able to accurately invoice out those costs. In that we are also Sage 50 users, I can quickly transfer invoiced amounts to this general management accounting system in order to track our P/L, cash on hand, debtors, creditors, and similar."

"Sage Coretime quickly provides me with the data that I require to invoice accurately. And because it captures all other relevant third party costs and expenses, I can ensure that those costs are correctly invoiced in order to maintain project profitability."

"Sage Coretime facilitates comprehensive project reporting," Mary explains. "This capability allows our firm's partners to quickly determine if we are on track to

