

Specsavers achieves visible success with Progress®-based business applications.



CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE

Specsavers needed to support local franchise owners with access to branding, centralized marketing, accounting, purchasing and IT services.

SOLUTION

The company is using applications from Progress® partners for in-store, back office and customer facing applications as well as mission-critical business systems, including warehousing, distribution and e-commerce.

WHY PROGRESS® SOFTWARE

With thousands of Progress-based applications to choose from worldwide, Specsavers can select solutions to best meet its specific needs and can benefit from best of breed technology.

BENEFIT

Specsavers has reduced costs, increased visibility of its business data and achieved a rapid return on investment.

With over 500 branches, Specsavers is the UK's No 1 optical retailer, selling, on average, one pair of glasses every six seconds. Globally it is in the top five optical groups. It runs its entire business on Progress-based applications—in-store for back office and customer-facing applications, at the Guernsey head office for all mission-critical business systems, including warehousing, distribution and e-commerce too.

There are 16 million customer records on the Progress OpenEdge® database. In fact, the only thing Progress does not do, is drive the robotic automation system which produces lenses to individual prescriptions.

“We have a complete ERP solution,” says IT Director, Michael Khan, “but built from best of breed components which provide the best fit for each business area. These applications and our in-house development environment share a common Progress technology platform which means we have built integration into our environment at a very fundamental level.”

With thousands of Progress-based enterprise-scale applications to choose from worldwide, Specsavers has a far greater ability to achieve best fit and the benefit of best of breed, than would be the case if relying on one ERP vendor.

“A single ERP solution can never be master of all trades, but that is what we have achieved here and at better value for money,” says Michel Khan.

“We write systems in-house that provide our unique competitive advantage, such as for customer-facing applications, and choose supporting systems from the vast range of packaged solutions available from Progress partners. The faster return on investment and low cost of ownership comes from the consistency of the IT platform and standards throughout the organisation which reduce software maintenance and integration costs.”

Specsavers operates a joint-venture partnership—or hybrid franchise—which enables local opticians to part own the store whilst being supported by strong branding, centralised marketing, accounting, purchasing and IT services. The idea was the brainchild of husband and wife optometrist team Doug and Mary Perkins who opened the first Specsavers outlets on their home island of Guernsey and in Bristol on the UK mainland in 1984. Today there are 700 joint venture partners, 10,000 employees and 500 branches, including over 40 in The Netherlands and 17 in Ireland.



LEVERAGING THE EXPERTISE OF PROGRESS APPLICATION PARTNERS

Applications from Progress Partners OpenAccounts and KCS were among the first to be implemented following the introduction of a new enterprise-wide IT strategy in 1997, which standardised on Progress as the underlying technology platform for both development and packaged software.

KCS was initially chosen for its k-PAYE payroll system which controlled payroll centrally at the Guernsey head office. In early 2002 the human resources module k-EM was added. The implementation of OpenAccounts provided a sophisticated core accounting package which OpenAccounts was able to tailor to Specsavers' unique consolidation and joint venture partner accounting requirements.

In its quest for best of breed, Specsavers has drawn upon other Progress partners worldwide going to Scotland for the internal help desk, to the USA for the warehouse and distribution system, to France for a branch document image processing system and to Canada for a retail banking and treasury solution.

Unusually, even the website is integrated into the head office systems infrastructure providing 'just another channel to market'. Built by Progress Professional Services the web site features lensmail.com which provides real-time access to the customer database to allow prescription customers to order contact lenses on-line.

Tightly knitted integration between the stores and group headquarters to provide wide area transparency supporting the free flow of information is a key ingredient in Specsavers' ability to deliver its customer service driven philosophy. It's a strategy that is working. With a turnover last year of half a billion pounds, Specsavers currently has a 27% share of the market—twice that of its nearest competitors, Boots Opticians and Dolland & Aitchison. They are also about to turn their magic on the hearing aid market with the recent acquisition of HearCare.

As Michel Khan observes: "Progress and its partners have played a significant role in our achievements and success and will continue to do so."

ABOUT OPENACCOUNTS

OpenAccounts plc was founded in 1990 to design and develop OpenAccounts Financials as a best of breed corporate accounting and financial management system. OpenAccounts' "best of breed" philosophy focuses on strength in back office transaction processing and integration and, more specifically, on adding value to the Finance function by making practical use of eBusiness technology to automate standard processes and workflow, not only within finance, but providing self-service access and information delivery across the entire organisation and to customers and suppliers. www.openaccounts.com

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— Michael Khan
IT Director

ABOUT KCS

KCS is a principal software and service provider of human resource management solutions based in the UK. We design, market and support applications and services for all sizes of organisations across various industry sectors. Our product line consists of k-EM[®] (Human Resource Management Software), k-PAYE[®] (Payroll Software), k-TIME[®] (Time and Attendance Software), Bureau and Managed Services (HR and payroll outsourcing solutions) alongside offering the full range of applications through an ASP delivery option.

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ABOUT PROGRESS SOFTWARE

Progress Software Corporation (Nasdaq: PRGS) provides application infrastructure software for the development, deployment, integration and management of business applications. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of information technology while minimizing its complexity and total cost of ownership.

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