

Whichever way you slice it

What does a very successful chartered accountant do when he decides he has had enough of number-tumbling, long working days as an audit partner, and cantakerous clients? Well, he buys a suburban hospitality and catering equipment business and works even harder, of course! Anyway, that's what happened to Lindsay Daniel, owner and managing director of Brice Australia in Burwood, a Melbourne eastern suburb.

Lindsay had decided enough was enough in the hectic world of accountancy and auditing and started casting around for something else to do.

"I was fed up with being on the 'advisor's' side of the desk and never being able to implement my own advice," Lindsay explained. "I wanted to swap sides and put my own ideas into practice and it didn't matter what sort of business it was."

Through a chance encounter with his solicitor, he learned that long-established food industry equipment distributor, Brice Australia, was on the market.

The company had been making and distributing food slicers, scales and related equipment since it was formed in 1939, and Lindsay bought it several years ago from the son-in-law of the founder.

Its impressive client list includes Woolworths, Coles and Bunnings as well as a wide range of restaurants, hotels, clubs, butchers and delicatessens — in fact, just about any food retailer. The company also imports and assembles customer-guidance systems and entry gates for major retailers.

Aside from its food equipment manufacturing activities, Brice Australia had been assigned the wartime task of making aircraft parts.

Brice was a manufacturer until the mid-1970s when it turned to importing and distribution as its mainstay. It now distributes a range of famous mostly European brands of slicers and scales. A major secondary activity is the equipment servicing side of the business. Brice support their brands totally and have an extensive national servicing operation. They also service non-Brice brands.



Brice Industries managing director, Lindsay Daniel, in his Burwood, Melbourne showroom.

When computer-science caught up with Brice Australia, a DOS-based system was installed to handle 'the financials'. After Lindsay came on the scene, he perceived the need for something far more comprehensive.

The business is headquartered in Melbourne, with branches in all States. Each branch is an independently-owned business — a quasi-franchise, says Lindsay. A system was required which could handle the reporting, warehousing and importing tasks nationally.

"I wanted much more flexibility of access to data," Lindsay said. "The DOS reporting system was far too limited, especially for tracking the servicing business.

"We surveyed three different systems and after a comprehensive analysis and review, we settled for the one offered by Decisive Solutions — we went live with it on July 1, 2006."

Lindsay says the Decisive system has performed 'magnificently' ever since.

"It has done everything I was looking for. I wanted much more CRM capability — it delivers it. I wanted extensive MRP capability for stock control and ordering and proper control of the importing process. I got it. There is also a great costing module.

"The most important factor was the backup from Decisive Solutions — it was comprehensive and knowledgeable.

"It was always timely, and over time they have got to know our business and been pro-active in their suggestions and service. I consider them a key part of my business now.

"Decisive Solutions' consultant Chris Carpentier has steered us through the installation and 'go-live' stages carefully and effectively. We were concerned that our employees, who were so used to the old system, would struggle with the demands of the new system. However, our fears were groundless as our employees were able to put the system to good use right from the start.

"They coped so well that we did not even have to carry out parallel runs with the old DOS system — just test data runs.

"We had no problems at all going live, no issues with training, and that all says something for the way Decisive approached it.

"It didn't matter what skills-sets the Brice people had, there was total comprehension from the start" Lindsay said.

He added that the business was 'doing quite nicely, thank you' and he was looking to extend the capability of the new system.

Decisive Solutions Pty. Ltd. is a systems consultancy providing ERP solutions throughout Australia, New Zealand and Asia. It provides software and supporting service to consolidate, manage and evaluate information flow and provide cost-effective management in challenging and rapidly-changing business environments.



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