



**Pinewood Associates Ltd**  
**improve operational efficiency**  
**with the help of Pegasus Opera**  
**and Synergy Technology**



# Background

**Pinewood Associates Ltd** is the UK's leading Manufacturer of office screens, room dividers, exhibition boards, and notice boards. The company's head office is in Eccles, Greater Manchester, where its manufacturing and distribution functions are also located. Pinewood has been based in Eccles since its founding in 1986.

Pinewood have been a client of Synergy Technology for over 30 years, making them one of the company's longest tenured customers. **Lyn Boardman** is **Operations Director** for Pinewood and has been with the company for the whole term of their partnership with Synergy Technology.

Lyn has witnessed how the company has evolved over that time. "I've been with the company for 32 years now, and it was around 30 years ago when we started dealing with Synergy Technology. In that time, I've seen how all the different elements of the business have grown, and now we've evolved into being the primary online resource for the types of products we sell."



Pinewood's relationship with Synergy started with Pegasus Opera, which they have used for 30 years, and Synergy have also provided Pinewood with SuperOffice CRM. "Originally it was with manufacturing elements of Opera which made it attractive to the company." Said Lyn. Apart from that it's the accounts, and the sales and purchase order processing side of it we use the most."

## The Challenge: Reducing Manual Processes

Pinewood has a number of different systems in addition to Opera. One of these Systems is VS Commerce, which is the eCommerce solution the company uses to take orders through its websites. This system was stand alone, meaning that orders taken through the website, then had to be manually entered into Opera for processing.

Lyn tells us how this process had worked previously. "We have our established e-commerce website Panelwarehouse.com which has grown at a rapid rate over the years, as well as our newly launched website Noticeboardwarehouse.com. Both of our websites take orders direct from customers online, we also have an internal sales team who take customer orders over the telephone which means they were keying in the customer information as well as the customer."

"Once a customer has ordered and paid, the order was then printed off the VS system and then a member of the administration team would input the order manually into Opera. Some days we can be processing 40 to 50 orders, so it was quite a manually intense job."



## The Solution: A Bespoke Opera Link to VS Commerce

The team at Pinewood were interested in looking at ways they could cut down on the amount of manual admin time, so they spoke to their account manager at Synergy Technology, **Mark Wilkinson**. “Mark came in to see us as a bit of an introduction and a catch up and to see what else we could do. I had numerous conversations with Mark, and after that I felt confident that they would be able to setup a link between VS Commerce and Opera. It was all about freeing up labour basically, so we haven’t got a member of the team just putting in orders all day.”

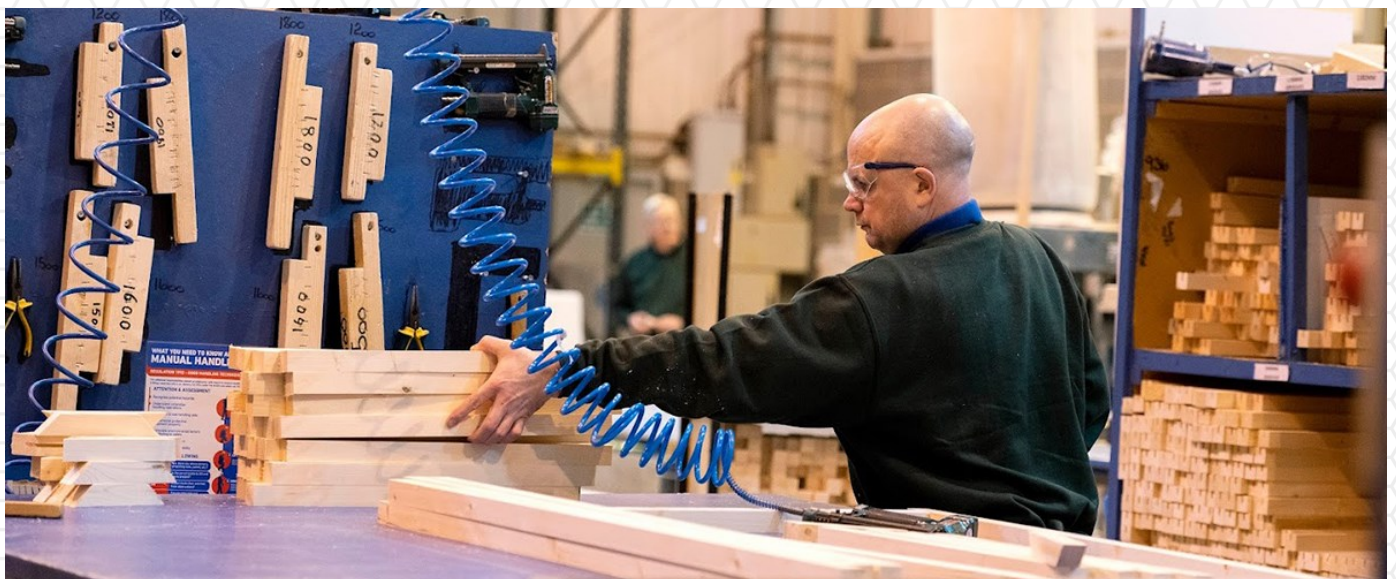
Synergy Technology put a dedicated developer, on the task, and he worked in conjunction with Mark to map out a solution. The solution suggested was an integration to transfer data directly from VS Commerce into Opera, drastically cutting down the amount of rekeying of information that used to take place. Lyn was very pleased with the way the planning process went. “Steve (the developer) was fantastic, he and Mark grasped the project quickly, and mapped out a detailed plan of how it would all work.”



## Improvements in Efficiency

Lyn explains how the link has made a difference to their order processing. "Now, as an order comes in from our website, the technology recognises which website the order has come from Panelwarehouse.com or Noticeboardwarehouse.com which ensures that the correct branding appears on all the stationary including the customers delivery note and invoice, it's quite intuitive how it works. It now removes the need for a member of the team to manually be inputting orders, printing the orders and also ensuring that the correct brand is used which eliminates mistakes. We can literally now just tick a box and process 10 or 15 orders at a time and they print out with the right paperwork, so that works really well for us and is super fast."

Now that the integration has been fully implemented, Lyn and the team can really see the benefits it has brought to the business by automating manual processes. "We've seen a huge benefit. We have a number of different brands, so it wasn't straightforward. We have our Pinewood brand where the orders don't always come through our website, and again, we have a member of the sales team who keys those orders in, so we introduced the SuperOffice quote module at the same time to make that a little bit quicker. Really we were just looking at how to take as much manual intervention out as possible."



As well as development work, Mark's extensive knowledge of Pegasus Opera has allowed them to make tweaks to the way they use the system. "Again, talking to Mark, when we were doing the first project, he noticed that one of the things we weren't doing was using batch processing to do invoicing. So, at the end of every day, a member of the team was getting all the individual invoices and going into every individual account. So, with an input of a little bit of knowledge from Mark, now we batch process, so again that's streamlined the process and saved us some time."

## Improvements on the Shop Floor

Once they had had success with the VS Commerce integration, the team at Pinewood were interested in looking at other ways they could streamline their business processes. One area they identified that could be improved was the link to their courier, DX Express. Lyn explains more. "We looked at the VS side of it and how that had freed up resources and applied that to a different area of the business."

"We used to have a member of the team whose job was purely to do courier labels, input orders and do the invoicing. So, we thought, well hold on a minute, we're still keying in data again into the DX system. So, I approached Mark and said can we do anything about that? Steve did some more magic, and we now have integrated the DX system and Opera."

"Now, every time a delivery is raised in Opera, the data is automatically exported into the DX System, so when someone on the shop floor, comes up to the office and needs a label all they need to do is input the order reference number and all the information is already there and populates the label ready to print including "Customers Special Instructions" which is obviously going to save a lot of time as well."



## Key Benefits

Lyn says that one of the key benefits Pinewood have seen is that the amount of time saved on admin tasks, this has allowed the company to re-allocate resources to other parts of the business. "What we've been able to do is when a member of the admin team decided to leave the company, we made the call that we no longer needed to fill that position, but instead we were able to add a new resource to our marketing department. We advertised and recruited a new member of our team who is responsible for growing our social media presence across all brands and can also support our marketing manager. The role is a more productive role in helping to grow brand awareness which assists in generating sales."

## The Future

So now with those two projects being a success, Pinewood have some more development work on the horizon. "I said to Mark, so you've poked the beast now! It's like, well, why can't we do this? So again, we've got Steve looking at a different area of the business. We sell a lot of other people's products through our website, and during the month of August, whereas it used to be maybe 5% of our turnover was other people's products like notice boards, classroom furniture, this August something like 20% of our turnover was third party products."



“They come in by the VS system and it automatically prints the orders, but then one of our team was then having to manually raise purchase orders on suppliers, so this extra piece of work will mean that there'll be another window pop up in opera and we'll just be able to select third party suppliers and then they'll go straight in and again attach a branded delivery note. So again, it saves us individually finding delivery notes. It's all been about streamlining our systems, finding these processes which are labour-intensive and automating them.”

Lyn thinks it's really been a benefit having an experienced, dedicated account manager who understands the system in Mark Wilkinson. “Mark's been great. He was new to our account, and he looked at it in a in a different way and he's quite confident and quite driven in what he wants to get for you. He introduced us to Steve, the developer who has worked on our projects. He's been such a professional and they've delivered exactly what they said.”



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