

With Help From Clarizen, *Sampling International* Grows Exponentially Across Three Continents



Sampling International is a global supplier of fabric sampling, swatch books and catalogues. The company specializes in window furnishings, soft and upholstery coverings and architectural hardware. Sampling International's sales and project management teams are located in California (U.S.) and Sydney (Australia) while production and manufacturing are mostly handled through the team located in China. Clients are primarily located in the US and Australia, while the company has recently expanded its activities to Europe.

Sampling International's sales and project management functions involve working with clients to coordinate the different components of the project. Because the company's larger clients work with external design agencies, Sampling International's work involves handling processes between two organizations to coordinate fabrics, ship them from all over the world to one facility, and then align expectations and tasks with the preproduction, print, design and manufacturing teams in China.

Anthony Lynch, is one of three owners of Sampling International and is currently based in Australia. He manages and oversees operations over the entire product cycle from initial selling stages to manufacturing, quality control and delivery. Because Sampling International's projects are handled across three continents, the projects can become quite complex. Anthony explains:

"Over the life of the project a lot can change. In some cases we work with 200 or 300 different fabrics from all over the world that we need to coordinate and import. Sometimes by the end of a project there are fewer fabrics because the client decided to drop the product or the manufacturer doesn't make it anymore. It's a fluid process all the way through."

Anthony explains another issue that affects project complexity and delivery: quality control.

"Projects take a long time because of the fabrics. When we conduct quality checks and discover problems with a particular fabric that comes from China, it takes a long time to re-import the fabric that is the right quality standard. Quality control is part of our job and can be the most important factor that extends the project's length; the longest project that we've done has lasted two years."

Sampling International was founded four years ago, and recently experienced significant growth. Previously, the teams were using Microsoft Excel and Outlook to manage their projects, but management felt that the feature-set was limited and the projects were scattered making it hard to manage all the operations across continents. Anthony was convinced that he needed a project management solution that would concentrate all the projects and timelines in one place for better transparency and project scalability. He looked into a number of solutions including Tenrox and AtTask.

“To be honest, we chose Clarizen over AtTask for two main reasons. First, we felt that AtTask was an older system with functions that were set in stone and required a lot of workarounds. Second, Clarizen’s customer service team was so much more responsive to our needs which in turn made it easier for us to get the system up and running. These two reasons were major selling points for us”, says Anthony.

Implementing Clarizen across the organization was a bit of a challenge, mostly because the employees managing the projects are not experienced project managers and generally have less experience with professional project management methodologies. Anthony decided that deployment of the solution should be divided into stages to avoid overwhelming the team.

Currently, the initial stage of creating a price quote with new clients is entirely handled through Clarizen. The sales representative collects the client information and passes it along to the internal administrator who opens up a job in Clarizen. Then the assignment is sent to the quoting department that coordinates with the manufacturing team to build a quote. With Clarizen, the entire process is completely transparent for management. Anthony explains,

“We’ve definitely become more efficient in file sharing and having better control over our information. With Clarizen we know what the status of all the projects are in real time and we’re really happy about that. As a manager I’m never looking for something, I just dive into Clarizen and pull up the latest quote”.

Sampling International has been growing at a fast pace from 15 employees to 500 in just over four years. The company has leaned on Clarizen’s robust solution to help manage this growth:

“Since using Clarizen we’ve grown 80% in the last year; we’ve been able to absorb the increase without too much overhead. With Clarizen, we’re doing three or four times more quotes with the same number of people. Being able to control the many different and complex processes in one place has allowed us to grow exponentially.”

Sampling International initially started working with several Clarizen licenses amongst their key product management employees; today the company has moved to the enterprise version and has expanded its user base across all three locations and in most departments. Anthony plans to expand Clarizen’s usage with the time-clock feature. He also plans to use Clarizen to provide him with a better idea of the project workload distribution among employees and the cost of each project.