Semaphore

With operations spanning multiple locations, time zones, currencies, and customers located worldwide – Semaphore sought a consolidated solution for their business that would provide real-time visibility over operations, and the ability to respond to customers more efficiently.

A merger in 2006 saw Australian RTUNet and European TechnoTrade come together to form Semaphore—a manufacturer and provider of high-end telemetry devices specialising in industrial solutions which monitor, measure, record and transmit data to a secondary location.

With offices in Australia, Belgium and the United States, Semaphore supplies clients worldwide and boasts a global customer base with WIN television, Eastern Municipal Water (California), SNCB national rail (Belgium) and Thales (France) being just a few of their clients.

The merger brought together two experts in the telemetry and engineering fields, but also left Semaphore operating different legacy systems across their regional offices. The result was a lack of real-time visibility over the business, process inefficiencies around reporting, and a reliance on manual data entry and third party programs like Excel to extend functionality.

In search of a consolidated platform, Semaphore engaged Fenwick Software in 2011 after obtaining quotes from other potential NAV partners.

Rodney Linton, Chief Operating Officer for Semaphore explains their decision to choose Fenwick over cheaper quotes from other partners:

"As an engineering firm, we value technical knowledge over sales guff and Fenwick offered this. They were knowledgeable, but also took the time to listen to us, understand our business and propose solutions based on logical decision making. There was no over-the-top sales pitch, and unlike many other partners, no requirement that we be handcuffed to an ongoing maintenance contract post-implementation."

The Engagement

With client stakeholders across different global regions, Fenwick worked hard to condense aspects of the NAV rollout to maximise the time of team members flown in for meetings, workshops and training.
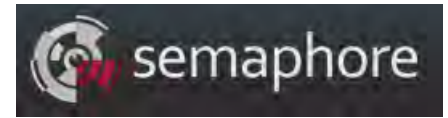
Implementation also involved careful tailoring of NAV to ensure the platform proved geographically relevant with respect to language, currenacy and regionally specific tax requirements.

"We're more responsive to our customers, are able to make more informed business decisions based on real-time data and have gained many efficiencies around reporting and planning."

Russell Outschoorn
Financial Controller
Semaphore Australia

In 6 months, Fenwick delivered the following outcomes for Semaphore:

A Consistent Platform & Real-Time Visibility Over Operations

With responsibilities assigned by function rather than location—real-time visibility over Semaphore's business is crucial to ensuring smooth operation.

Prior to implementing NAV, Semaphore lacked visibility across their entities and were often hearing about problems after the fact. The time difference between regions also resulted in a less than ideal response period for customer questions and queries.

Fenwick's implementation of NAV has meant that any Semaphore user now has access to a real-time view of business activity including warehouse inventory, order processing, finances, and planning & forecasting, resulting in enhanced business efficiency, more informed decision making, and the ability to work together more effectively as one company.

Consolidated Financial Reporting 'in a Flash' & Greater Access to Information

Previously, Semaphore's financial reporting system consisted of an Excel spreadsheet emailed between regions to generate a consolidated weekly report. Data was manually entered, copied, pasted, spliced and manipulated to capture only what was relevant for reporting needs—a process that was time intensive, clunky and open to human error.

Implementation of NAV, and specifically

"They were knowledgeable, but also took the time to listen to us, understand our business and propose solutions based on logical decision making.

- *Rodney Linton, COO, Semaphore*

Fenwick's tailoring of the Finance module to meet Semaphore's reporting requirements, has yielded significant efficiencies from a group processing perspective. At the click of a button, Semaphore are now able to generate a 'Flash Report' which delivers a snapshot of their business at any time, from any regional office. Additionally, they are also able to splice and tag data in different ways to suit different reporting requirements and business needs, e.g. monthly reports for head office.

Inventory, Order Processing & Customer Management

Semaphore's Australian and Belgium offices are manufacturing and sales sites. They each manufacture products unique to their region which they on-sell to each other for sale within their respective markets. Semaphore's United States office however, is predominantly focused upon sales and customer support of these products.

This integrated system of co-manufacture and offshore support is an efficient separation of duties, but relies heavily upon all users being interconnected via one system.

In the past, customer support users in the States needed to email Belgium or Australia to determine inventory availability and status of orders. This process was not only time consuming, but

also resulted in inefficient processing of orders and less than ideal response times for customers.

Fenwick built a custom dashboard to provide the customer support team with immediate visibility of key data including the status of orders, monies outstanding, and customer spend.

Assisted by the implementation of the Fenwick Gold module eDocument, selling products between regions is now a simple click of a button. The NAV order purchase process is entirely automated with external orders acknowledged electronically and intercompany orders converted to sales orders automatically—saving steps, and saving time.

"We were genuinely surprised at the amount of knowledge they had about our business process. They worked hard to understand what we do, and this understanding meant they were able to give us some ideas around process efficiencies when we couldn't make up our own minds. They were essentially business process advisors."

- *Rodney Linton, COO, Semaphore*

Improved Planning & Forecasting

Historically, Semaphore were reliant upon Excel spreadsheets to plan their purchase orders. Based on information sent through from their warehouses, Semaphore would update a planning spreadsheet—manually manipulating the data for each product and entering new lines for new goods. Implementation of NAV has simplified this process, with the platform now automatically generating a list of recommended purchase orders for management to approve electronically.

The flexibility of NAV has also proven to be a helpful planning tool for other areas of the business like Sales, which previously had limited access to financial and inventory data. Access to NAV now means that such teams are able to tap into information including customer purchase history, current orders and stock levels to better inform their roles, decision-making and ability to meet customer needs.

A Platform fit for a Global Business

Previously, Semaphore had to "change their way of thinking" when considering one regional entity over another. Implementation of NAV has brought consistency to their business and made the management of three entities spread out across the globe much more efficient.

It has also been a seamless transition for a business that was previously operating different systems to manage different languages, tax requirements, currencies and products in their various regions. Implementation of NAV's language and multi-currency modules has meant that all users across the business now view the same database in real-time, tailored to their regional requirements.

Semaphore also elected to implement twelve Fenwick Gold NAV modules— additional functionality designed exclusively by Fenwick to offer users a more tailored NAV operation aligned to specific business needs, e.g. Advanced Analysis Reporting, Advanced Stocktake, Advanced Forecasting, eDocument and Receivables Management.

Working with Fenwick

A year after Fenwick's NAV implementation for Semaphore, Rodney Linton only has good things to say about the platform his business now uses every day.

"We're more responsive to our customers, are able to make more informed business decisions based on real-time data and have gained efficiencies around reporting and planning."

He continues: "We're doing more now for our customers than we did previously. We've turned efficiency gains into better service. We're more available to our customers which has facilitated better interaction."

Overall, Linton sums up the Fenwick NAV implementation experience as "Fun! There were serious moments, but overall it was fun. It was actually a good process."

When asked about Fenwick as a NAV partner, Linton speaks glowingly about the team, in particular Brad Foot and Atish Malla stating: "We were genuinely surprised at the amount of knowledge they had about our business process. They worked hard to understand what we do, and this understanding meant they were able to give us some ideas around process efficiencies when we couldn't make up our own minds. They were essentially business process advisors."

On whether he would recommend Fenwick to others, Linton comments "Yes. And I have!"

Fenwick Software and Microsoft Dynamics NAV

When you partner with Fenwick Software you'll find people who care about your business. We're not interested in supplying and implementing software for its own sake. Our approach is consultative and collaborative. We build enduring relationships that create long term benefits. We've been doing this since 1976.

Our team of consultants is highly experienced and understand business as well as technology. Microsoft Dynamics NAV is our ERP system of choice because it offers unparalleled functionality, flexibility and cost effectiveness. It means we can customise the system to suit exactly what you need, and continue to adapt this over time as your needs change. Microsoft Dynamics NAV has more than 92,000 customers, over one million users worldwide, and is available in more than 40 country versions. Powerful software, Fenwick's team of committed experts and your business – together we'll create a system that works.