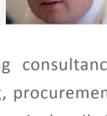


# 250-PERSON CONSULTANCY NEEDED MORE PROJECT VISIBILITY

Many thanks to **Steve Laird**, Group Finance Director, the On

Line Group, for their input



**On Line  
Design**

On Line Design & Engineering are a 250-strong consultancy offering front-end engineering design, engineering, procurement and construction management to the petro-chemical, oil & gas, pharmaceutical and general engineering industries.



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## THE CHALLENGE

On Line carries out a mixture of jobs, some of which are reimbursable and some of which are done on a fixed fee basis. In the early days of the business with a small number of personnel, they found it relatively easy to keep paper copies and timesheets and use these as backup for time charges to clients. It was also easy to keep control of a small number of fixed fee projects.

“However,” said Chairman Jeff Laird, “as the company grew, it became increasingly difficult to control and report on the amount of hours that were being booked to projects.”

They wrote their own in-house project control system, which was later completely rewritten to take account of growth. However, ultimately due to the number of transactions and the age of the system, it becomes quite unwieldy to operate. At this point the decision was made to investigate the market.

## THE RESULT

Steve Laird: “The best thing about Synergist is the visibility it brings. It shows where the costs are, where the profits are on individual projects, and where the losses are – all giving you time to do something about it.

“It shows what’s been invoiced, what’s not been invoiced, work-in-progress reports and timesheet listings.

“We previously used an in-house system. But it was unreliable and insufficient.

“Today, we could not envisage working without Synergist. We’ve just recommended it for one of our subsidiary companies.

“The normal rules of ROI don’t really apply, because the benefits are so much greater than the costs.

Jeff Laird, Chairman: “We’ve found the service we have had from Synergist and Magnifeye [part of The Agency Works team] has been excellent right from the original bid stage, through implementation, training and back up support.

“At each visit that we have had for training or system back up, new functions have been identified and the support we have had has always been focused on how the software can be used to improve the profitability of On Line.”

Steve Laird: “It’s the best support we have ever had from any company.

“You hear horror stories out there of customers waiting 2-3 days for support. With Synergist you get helped right away.”



Project work by On Line Design

Steve Jeff Laird: “We quickly discovered that the [Synergist] system had more useful functions than we thought we had required.”

One of the functions which has proved to be invaluable is the ability to invoice multiple jobs for a client, thus reducing the amount of time and invoices raised.

They’ve also found that the reporting function is extremely powerful, enabling them to choose from standard reports within the system or to create their own with the quick report functions.

There are other benefits for the company too. Jeff added: “In addition to integrating with our accounts software, Synergist also has the ability to produce and print invoices. This has saved an enormous amount of time within our accounts department since they do not actually have to produce invoices now.

“While with Synergist, we’ve grown from a £12m-£13m company to one that is about three times that size. Synergist has played a part in that.

“Synergist makes a huge difference.

“If Synergist was hypothetically taken away from us, we’d have to go with a fully-fledged ERP system. That would cost us a lot more, and bring various headaches including complexity of implementation and a lack of flexibility and a disconnection from our accounts system. Believe me, I would never look at another system.

“I have no doubts about recommending Synergist. I don’t think you could find anything better or more affordable.

“I don’t think there’s a bad thing about Synergist. It worked like a dream.

“With a lot of other systems it’s not always easy to find the information you want, and they are not easy to learn. With Synergist you can hit the ground running.

“Synergist is reliable. We’ve been running it for over 10 years, and I don’t think you can break it.”



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“It gives us great visibility of our clients, projects, estimating, everything.

“Synergist gives us details of profit or loss on every project, and the latest status.

“For what you get, Synergist is really good value.

“Our clients like it and we have some huge clients, like ConocoPhillips, Total and TATA. They like the way we can give them details of time and costs on projects. Today, they want a certain level of transparency, and they demand periodic audits, where they come in and analyse the entire system. We sail through those audits every time.

“Clients increasingly want fixed price work. They’re under pressure themselves, so they want to fix their costs, and some of those jobs are very large so you have to be able to really rely on your system to get it right.

“Synergist gives us the visibility of projects that we need. It gives us efficiencies. It reduces costs on jobs. And it gives us control. In a one-word summary, I would say it delivers Visibility.”



Implementation and consultation by

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