

# THE BOTTOM LINE

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## A MAS 500 Case Study at West Coast Title Search

# STILL LEARNING THINGS TO LIKE ABOUT IT

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**Situation:** West Coast Title Search Ltd. provides legal filing and information retrieval in over 200 government offices as well as serves legal documents to individuals and corporations throughout Greater Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster and by agents throughout the rest of B.C. and the world. West Coast has 72 employees and generates up to 1,000 invoices a day.

In 2001, West Coast was struggling with their existing MAS 90 system. The problems were not really in the software, but in the support they were getting from one "gentleman" that had customized the system.

System crashes were frequent and West Coast was five versions behind because of a reluctance to redo the customizations for the current version. While investigating alternatives, West Coast discovered that a trusted vendor/implementation, Essential Software Solutions (ESS), was supporting MAS 500 (but not MAS 90). Although there were other products that might have met their needs, MAS 500 had the advantages of not only being supported by a trusted vendor,

but also West Coast was entitled to an upgrade price from MAS 90, which made it more compelling.

As well, West Coast has a number of requirements that would inevitably lead to customizations. They needed a system that was very strong in customizations including the ability to make changes outside of source code and thereby avoid being trapped with older versions.

**Solution:** West Coast implemented MAS 500 in the fall of 2002. The MAS 500 system includes customer relationship management (CRM), accounting and financials, project accounting, distribution, manufacturing, human resources, payroll, enterprise reporting, and electronic commerce.

However, West Coast only needed the financial system — General Ledger, Financial Reporting (using FRx), Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Cash Management and Multi-Currency.

Although West Coast is in the service industry, timesheet and project tracking would be overkill for their projects which are typically completed in less than a day. As well, many of their employees don't have

access to computers and so the costs for timesheet and project tracking can not be justified.

MAS 500 has been implemented at over 4,500 customers worldwide with 15 in Canada. MAS 500 is only one of many products owned by Best Software, Inc., which is a subsidiary of The Sage Group plc.

Other products include Platinum for Windows, BusinessWorks, Peachtree, Abra (Payroll/HR), FAS (Fixed Assets), SalesLogix (CRM), ACT (Contact Management), Timeslips (Time & Billing), Carpe Diem (Time & Billing) and Timesheet Professional.

MAS 500 was built from scratch in the last few years using Microsoft Visual Basic and C++.

It is optimized for Microsoft SQL Server and strong in customization not only in screen changes but in also adding custom applications. Customization is outside of source code so that conflicts in upgrades should be eliminated.

**Challenges:** West Coast disburses funds on behalf of its clients and these disbursements could be 90 per cent of an invoice.

It is critical for West Coast that these disbursements be treated differently than services

on invoices and statements as well as not being classified as revenues. This was the biggest modification by ESS, West Coast's implementer of MAS 500.

West Coast also provides all transactions with customers in an electronic format to some customers. ESS has also customized MAS 500 to generate an unloadable transaction file for a number of West Coast's clients.

West Coast uses Maximizer as its contact management system, which is not integrated with MAS 500. West Coast uses a customized report in MAS 500, which exports client revenue data into Maximizer for month-to-date and year-to-date fees.

However, there is no synchronization of contacts or customers between MAS 500 and Maximizer so that changes and additions must be done twice.

West Coast does have some alternatives including additional customizations or converting to Best's SalesLogix system which is tightly integrated with MAS 500.

**Costs and Benefits:** With the upgrade from Best MAS 90, West Coast paid about \$32,000 for a seven-user software license and all services except for customizations that cost an

additional \$32,000.

MAS 500 has eliminated duplication of work and most importantly West Coast is not waiting for or paying the "gentleman" to fix the crashes that occurred in the past.

**Bottom Line:** You can expect to hear more about Best products in the future. Despite having offices in Ontario since 1993 with over 45 employees developing key components of MAS 90, there is low visibility of Best products in Canada.

Realizing this, Best has established a Canadian marketing office in Toronto. Best is one of the few competitors to Microsoft with the resources and install base to give Microsoft a battle in the mid market accounting system wars.

MAS 500 has a lot to offer West Coast. According to Ruth Balfour, Manager of Accounting Services, "We are still learning things we like about it."

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