

Bunbury Port Authority

www.byport.com.au

October 2001

Bunbury Port Authority is the primary facilitator of trade and transport entering and leaving the port in Bunbury.

The business employs 13 full time staff and has been operating since 1908. We talked to Graham Coves, at the Port Authority offices in Bunbury.

Who are your customers?

Primarily importers and exporters as you would expect. But we also have a secondary group of customers - government departments, customs, health and immigration.

How do they benefit from your service?

We provide the infrastructure and services to keep the port running and maintained. The efficiency, stability and cost effectiveness of the service has been proven over the past ten years. In fact, Bunbury is one of the most efficient ports in Australia.

How do you use digital technology in your business?

We have an Ericsson multi-line telephone system that allows us to transfer calls easily. We use mobiles because we're mobile. The port covers a wide area and we move around a lot.

There are 20 computers and 4 servers in the system. The accounting software - covering accounting, debtors, creditors and the shipping software - covering shipping arrivals, departures and cargoes is in the process of being integrated.

We originally took up a local government system and have modified it to suit our needs. We've developed our own system cost effectively... spending about \$50,000 as against the millions that larger ports have spent. Regardless of the difference in investment, we have tended to stay at the forefront for our size.

We're automating all the processes step by step. Most shipping lines pay electronically... and we are integrating payment into our system. So in two years we are down to just 2% cheques.

There is also a great deal of documentation generated in our business. So we are now automating most of those processes as well. Not so long ago, agents used to mail documents to us. Then they changed to fax. We are now moving them to an electronic document interchange system. We looked at a lot of different systems and decided to do it ourselves.

E-mail is used a lot for business to business communication with shippers and agents. We like e-mail because it is more considered and provides documentary evidence of each process.

We have a Web site at www.byport.com.au. It's been running now for two or three years. It's mainly there to give information. Shipping is updated every hour. Pilots update the latest arrivals. There's a history of all shipping over the past five years. New tenders are posted on-line and companies can download documentation for tenders.

We also have a weather station that downloads information to the Web site - tide, wind, barometric pressure, currents, water and air temperature.

Who is your on-line audience?

The industry that we supply services to plus anyone interested in the movement of ships and cargoes between Bunbury and other ports.

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How are you connected to the Internet?

A 64K ISDN line through the local ISP.

Where did you go for advice?

We did a lot of research. And we use a company – IT Vision for the database side of the system.

Did you do the work yourselves or use outside contractors?

We did all of it ourselves.

How much did it cost?

My time. There was no external cost.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None really. We had a lot of feedback early on in development and reacted to it.

What were the main risks you took?

No risk.

What advice would you give someone else?

Keep it simple. Target who your customers are.

How do you promote your site?

Search engines. Word of mouth. And through trade organisations such as AAPMA and APEC.

What are the benefits you are hoping for?

Cost benefits. Perception benefits. The work we've done is a good advertisement for the Authority.

We've gained increased efficiency through automating processes. Information goes on the Web site and this makes us more efficient. We're more timely in the provision of information... we update hourly. Tenders are down loaded... we don't have to send them out any more. Annual reports are now available electronically... so people down load them at no cost to us. Our industry has an international overtone... so the Internet suits what we do.

What are you planning to do next?

Get the workshops on-line. Allow pilots to dial up from home, log in and check the weather station. Put in a new weighbridge and link it into the network.

Fully integrate the system... full EDI. So agents can log on, send e-mails and down load documents without using a third party. We already have a one to one relationship with our customers. There are only about 30-40 large customers that we deal with.

What is the most important thing you learned in the last year?

If you don't know how to do it get someone in who does.