



PETROLEUM PRODUCTS RESELLER FINDS FINANCIAL ANSWER

Chetwynd Petroleums, a high-volume fuels distribution business, now has automated Cardlock sales, inventory control with financial management tools from Oneir Solutions
by Andy Shaw

Finding the right financial tools for managing your business and then getting everything up and running is no easy task. Especially when you need that to happen in a hurry. Naturally, you would like to find rock-solid accounting software that can handle your various sales channels, bullet-proof hardware to run it, swift installation, tailor-made training, and close-at-hand customer care when things go wrong - all in one package, if it existed. Well, it does. Just ask the folks at Chetwynd Petroleums Ltd. Operating in the remotest of northern British Columbia and in somewhat desperate need, Chetwynd Petroleums found that rare mix of the right tools, set-up, training and support for managing their finances - with just one phone call.

Within three weeks of their call to Oneir Solutions in Toronto, Chetwynd was doing business using Oneir financial management tools and had switched over completely from their previous Accounting system - all

without any face-to-face visit from Oneir staff. Ever since, the Oneir integrated blend of Accounts Receivable Software, Account Payable Software, General Ledger Software, Point of Sale POS Software, Sales Order Software and Inventory Management System - all running on a durable Linux-based server provided by Oneir - was smoothly handling the company's staggering onslaught of daily bookkeeping needs. It isn't uncommon at Chetwynd Petroleums to process 300-400 fuel sales a day or more - amounting to over 10,000 transactions a month for their on account customers.

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"I remember the day very clearly when the call from Chetwynd Petroleums came in," says Jon Mainwaring, executive Vice President of Oneir Solutions Inc. based in Toronto. "Lorne Dalke, the president of

the company, had been referred to us by another enthusiastic customer we have in the fuels business in BC, and Lorne explained that his company was running the Accounting and billing side of their business on proprietary software from a local supplier that was about to go out of business."

In response, Mainwaring quickly put together a quote for Dalke that addressed in particular one of Chetwynd's major concerns for finding a replacement system - how to transform the "Cardlock" fuel management system by OPW used by many of their customers from what was Chetwynd's paper-based Accounting to an electronic system.

Those customers roll in to tank up from all corners of The District of Chetwynd, set in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Rich in oil, gas, coal and timber, it is the natural transportation hub of the mighty Peace River Country. Oneir helps Chetwynd Petroleums keep financial watch as its pumps provide the gas and the grease needed by the rolling stock and machinery of the area's natural resources industries. Seven days a week and on call 24 hours a day, their

Oneir enables Chetwynd Petroleums to accurately account for the automated fill up of gas tanks aboard logging and other heavy duty trucks - to the tune of as many as 50,000 litres of gas, diesel and other fuels a day. In addition, Oneir handles the company's over-the-counter bulk sales of a wide range of industrial lubricants from the Chetwynd Petroleums warehouse. As well, Oneir Sales Order Software enables Chetwynd drivers to make house-call deliveries to far flung oil rigs, mines and lumber camps without losing track of a penny. All this multiple channel selling makes for an avalanche every day of invoicing, billing and accounting to be kept track of by the Office Manager. Small wonder they were very concerned about replacing their Business Accounting Software.

But with the quote quickly approved and a deposit from Chetwynd in hand, out went the Linux-based server from Oneir by courier, all loaded up with selected-for-the-customer financial modules on board. This unique combination of advanced hardware and proven software that has been made increasingly robust over nearly 20 years of development and refinement is the heart of the Oneir financial management package.

"But we do a lot more than just supply reliable hardware and software," says Jane Giggall, Oneir's CEO and President. "We first send out a comprehensive Letter of Understanding & Implementation Plan that spells

out of the nature of our relationship with our customer, what the next steps are that we both need to take, and who is responsible for what. Our customers really seem to appreciate that kind of step-by-step detail. As a result, we get things very clear from the beginning, which is what you need to do if you want your relationship with the customer to be long-term - and we do."

Once the letter was signed back by Dalke, Oneir rapidly set about to develop the Cardlock interface, convert the data from their old system, set-up and confirm the functionality of the Linux server, computerize company invoicing and train staff on the Oneir software.

"The support Oneir provides is awesome."

Despite being 3,000 kilometers apart, Chetwynd and Oneir enjoy a far closer relationship than Chetwynd had with its old supplier who was by comparison a stone's throw away, just 60 kilometers down the road.

"We're set up at Oneir to give customers close support no matter where they are," explains Mainwaring. "We can go online with them. So both at the customer end and our end, we are looking and working with the same screen while talking to each other on the telephone. That allows us to do a number

of things including conducting specialized training with the customer, or helping them resolve a problem they may have, or going straight into their system and correcting it directly - all without shutting the system down."

"In the past when we had a problem, we had a call in our provider. Then we had to wait a couple of hours for them to get there. Shut our system down while they worked on it. And pay them for all that time as well," says Candide Lavoie, Chetwynd Petroleums' Office Manager, and the person most intimately involved with the Oneir system.

But what Lavoie likes most about Oneir is its ease of use.

"I had a little bit of experience on computers before but not much," says the Quebec native. "So I was surprised by how quickly I was able to understand it. It is so easy to operate and even to program it. And if I don't understand something, I can call the customer support staff at Oneir and right away they will walk me through it. Oneir comes with a big and excellent instruction book but I've rarely had to refer to it. Either way, the as-needed support Oneir provides is awesome. We've had help with our old system, but not like this."

That user-friendly design and Customer Support has encouraged Chetwynd Petroleums to make more use of Oneir's many capabilities than they had originally thought. In addition to the

more standard Accounting functionality that matched their previous system, Oneir developed that new module for the fuels industry that automatically tracks all Cardlock sales. And more recently they have increased the protection of their Inventory by adding on Oneir's inventory and tracking control. "I hope that in the future the company will also integrate Oneir's Canadian Payroll application," adds Lavoie.

"In effect, what Chetwynd Petroleums has done with their Oneir financial management tools is to fully automate their business," says Mainwaring. "I am truly amazed at the volume of business handled by Chetwynd with such a small admin staff. Today, the business can not only more efficiently maintain its current level of activity but also position itself for growth and expansion if desired. Oneir was designed with the owners of more than one store or business location in mind. That means they can employ Oneir tools to manage growth without needing an IT department in-house. You don't have to be an expert to use them. We make sure of that."

That opinion is echoed by Chetwynd Petroleums General Manager Matt Dalke, son of founder Lorne. "Even without any real computer skill at all, I can now handle payments, make other changes and print a statement, if our office manager is away and I have to. Also, two of our drivers are even doing their own bills," says Dalke. "But more importantly to the company, having Oneir in place

means we can get our statements out way quicker and go back months into our records if we have to. We could never do that before."

And although Lorne Dalke has elevated himself from much of the day-to-day operations at Chetwynd Petroleums, it gives him a vantage point to see what a business tool can do for the business overall - and to tell others about it. He has even purchased his first personal computer, a laptop, so that he can tap into the operation while he is away. This from someone who refused to touch a keyboard a mere eight months ago.

"We are really pleased with the Oneir system and what it is doing for our business," concludes Dalke. "And if any other company is considered using Oneir, they are free to call us and talk to Candide, our Office Manager, in particular about it. We're glad to do that because we can wholeheartedly recommend Oneir."

Andy Shaw is a freelance writer, broadcaster and international journalist with articles in many business and technical publications.