

# Advanced simplicity

**PES**  
**Report**  
Dave Tudor



Southampton-based ERP/MRP software developer 123 Insight is different from the norm. There's no sales team as such, no account managers and no sales pitch to speak of, not to mention a 'try before you buy' arrangement that seems too good to be true. **Dave Tudor** looked for the catch – and found there wasn't one.

**1** 23 Insight was started in 2000 by Guy Amoroso and Craig Grant – managing director and operations director respectively with the latter also assuming the role of chief designer and architect.

From day one the brief was clear: to create ERP/MRP software that was: (a) simple to use, highly intuitive, yet suitable for companies of all shapes and sizes and (b) would be very affordable without excessive upfront costs and customisation fees.

A third stipulation was that the user shouldn't be over-reliant on the vendor to be able to use the software successfully. And installations and updates should be simple processes – thereby negating excessive consultancy fees. 123 Insight appears to have achieved all these objectives with headroom to spare.

As a company, 123 Insight is constantly developing its software. It's both encouraging and reassuring to know that it re-invests a third of its subscription income back into R&D. This is a highly competitive marketplace so standing still really isn't an option.

"I've been involved with manufacturing software since the early 1980s," Guy Amoroso reveals, "and I would summarise my experiences by saying that in many cases, installing manufacturing software has resulted in a lot of stress and disappointment for the customer – not to mention implementation programmes that seemed to go on forever. When we started 123 Insight, we saw it as an opportunity to show clients how it should be done. We call it 'Advanced Simplicity.'

## Nothing to lose, everything to gain

Not all companies will be aware of the virtues of using ERP/MRP software, but if any of the following scenarios sound horribly familiar, chances are the benefits will be significant: an inability to grow the business with



**123 Insight's managing director, Guy Amoroso**

current resources; a lack of visibility and control; wasting time looking for information; costly mistakes; duplication of effort; overstocking – but still with shortages; lack of focus on costs and profits; and struggling with on-time and right first time.

For interested parties, the 123 Insight journey is essentially a three-stage, risk-free, no obligation process: (i) attend a free 2.5-hour Evaluation Workshop (ii) if that gets the juices flowing, undergo six days of training which will cover the core

system and then, if boats are suitably floated, (iii) complete registration for a 'pay as you go' monthly subscription with not a binding contract in sight.

The subscription includes all software updates and consequently the peace of mind that things will always be up to date. Also, importantly, customers can be assured that there will be absolutely no hidden costs jumping out and biting them on the proverbial posterior.

Further, although installation is claimed to be a relatively simple process, 123 Insight does offer an affordable remote installation service for those with somewhat more nervous dispositions. Total implementation time is typically six to eight weeks.

## Coming soon to a venue near you

In terms of the Evaluation Workshops, geographically the designated venues span the length and breadth of the country – from Wolverhampton to Dublin and Sheffield to

Glasgow. And they're frequent and regular. At the time of writing there were 40 sessions planned before the end of the year.

I attended a workshop in Hitchin, Hertfordshire and by the end of the 2.5-hour session I had a pretty good understanding of how the software worked and how it could be applied to a manufacturing business. Whilst I can't recommend the effectiveness of software itself in a real-life environment (because I'm not a user), I certainly can endorse the user-friendliness of the system and also the relaxed yet informative approach of the workshops. This is not about selling; but more about educating and informing. The other attendees seemed to agree.

The most important thing with this arrangement is the fact that until part (iii) it's all free. No money changes hands and companies can walk away at any stage. No obligation really means no obligation; statistically, 80%



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of companies that attend an Evaluation Workshop do so through recommendation and of those that attend training sessions, an impressive 98.7% go on to subscribe. "Many customers have been with us since day one," Mr Amoroso affirms.

A highly intuitive, customisable, user-friendly interface with a powerful engine under the bonnet is an accurate way of describing 123insight. Some software companies offer a base package with bolt-on (chargeable) modules as their business model but conversely – with the exception of some specialised options – all users of 123insight get the same software.

"This was a key element from the start," Mr Amoroso says. "Our customers range from two-man companies right up to enterprises with 2,500 licences operating across industries spanning everything from marine and defence through to aerospace, oil and gas and textiles.

"The way we deploy the software means that specific functionality can be 'switched on' as and when it is required. 123insight was designed from the ground up as one size fits all software, and our diverse, 250-strong customer base is testament to its effectiveness. Certainly worthy of note is that since 2007, 123insight has won 31 national and international awards."

## No stone left unturned

It's always difficult for any company to define a 'typical' customer but Mr Amoroso advises that potential 123 Insight clients tend to fall into one of three categories: "They're either businesses that have an existing ERP/ MRP system that they've outgrown or is no longer



fit for purpose; or often they've been sold a system, been promised the earth and expectations haven't been met; or they're an organisation that's totally new to software systems, have been using manual processes for years, are ready to make the switch but are totally confused by the minefield of products in the marketplace. We have many customers from all three camps."

Most ERP/MRP systems available today purport to cover all elements of a business and in this regard 123insight is about as extensive as it gets. Mr Amoroso says the system covers everything from enquiries to invoicing but it's the detail that really makes 123insight a companywide solution.

It's a given that the system will take care of all core elements such as quotations, order entry, stock control, bills of materials, purchasing, production scheduling, works orders and despatch, but 123insight can also help manage processes like Kanban, subcontracting, quality systems and servicing/ maintenance requirements.

For users needing even more functionality, 123 Insight offers a number of optional capabilities such as Access Dimension Accounts Integration, Advanced Accounting Interfaces and CRM+. The latter includes a comprehensive Customer Relationship Management system that does what it says on the tin – managing and staying in touch with customers and progressing and converting quotations to sales orders.

In a similar vein, CRM+ also features SRM – Supplier Relationship Management which takes care of purchasing and the supply chain, taking in new products, price negotiations, compliance issues, and supplier audits.

A further option that may appeal to some customers is 123 Insight's Software Development Kit (SDK) which provides a safe and secure method of passing data into

123insight from third party software and systems so that users don't have to write directly to its database tables. The kit consists of a suite of SQL stored procedures and supporting documentation that a systems developer can use when linking application to 123insight.

## Customer endorsements

Transparency is a refreshing quality that is central to 123 Insight's approach to business and that also applies to pricing. On the company's website, potential users can access a calculator that, after answering a few simple questions, will illustrate exactly how much the software will cost on a monthly, pay as you go basis which can be cancelled at any time.

Post implementation, service and support calls (also included in the monthly subscription fee), are few and far between in the vast majority of cases. "Our average call rate is one call, per customer, per month," enthuses 123 Insight's marketing manager Martin Bailey.

This transparency also extends to customer case studies. The best endorsement of any product or service is directly from a customer and on the company's website, there

are over 50 case studies – including a series of '10 years on' customers – where clients offer their honest assessments of the software and how it has helped their respective businesses.

After viewing the case studies, it's not difficult to see why 123insight is so popular; customers like its simplicity and the real, tangible business benefits it brings. The fact that they're prepared to say so shouldn't be underestimated; if companies struggle to get customer endorsements, there's usually a reason. One customer referred to 123insight as 'the cheapest employee we have in the company'.

Looking forward, Mr Amoroso has a number of plans for 123insight but undoubtedly the most significant is to move it lock, stock and barrel over to a browser-based platform: "We never do things by half so this won't happen overnight, but this is definitely the way things are moving," he concludes. "Our software will need to be accessible from a range of different devices so we need to be ahead of the curve in this regard."

# Get your business punching above its weight



## All the success - none of the risk.

If you need to implement or replace an MRP/ERP system, why suffer the blows of the expensive traditional selection approach by paying for a system before you know if it will suit your needs?

With 123insight there's no risk. Attend a free Evaluation Workshop, held around the country each month. If you think the system is a good fit then attend the six days of **No Obligation** training, on the understanding that if you decide not to move forward you walk away with nothing to pay. After that it's a low monthly subscription with no minimum tie-in period.



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