

My Sage Intelligence Story: The opportunity, the challenge and the success



This is a story of fun, great people, an incredible product and a radical change in the direction of my life. Back in 2003, the arrival of two salesmen on the doorstep of the company where I worked was the start of a great adventure. They had come to demo a brand new reporting application called Alchemex.

How did I know within minutes that this was an out-of-the-ordinary product that would make a significant difference in the lives of our clients? I can only equate it to the romantic notion of love at first sight. When it happens, people tell you they “just knew”. I just knew that this was an incredible opportunity to add value to the clients of the accounting firm where I worked as Computer Audit Manager and IT Director.

I already knew the value of Excel as a reporting tool. I was also the champion of our firm’s CaseWare (a statutory financial reporting application), so I understood the value of a reporting tool that could import accounting data. But here was a product that allowed manipulation of data at the back end, joined tables, exported to Excel and, best of all, saved the report as a permanent template that allowed reports to be run at the click of a button. Effectively Alchemex made Excel the report writer for any accounting package.

At that first meeting around a cramped desk, there was already a hint of the special friendship that would grow with Charles Teversham and Gary Boddington, two of the Alchemex founders, and they didn’t need their newly researched selling techniques to convince me that this was a useful and user-friendly business intelligence (BI) tool.

The more I used the product, the more I realised it could be a vehicle for doing the things I loved, and so began my tentative steps towards joining this fledgling company which had just moved out of Gary’s garage. It became obvious that I could add more value outside the company, so I made a decision to start my own small business in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. I was the first reseller of this awesome product and I hoped it would grow enough to support me and my family.

Those first few years were tough, fun, rewarding and challenging. Cash was sometimes pretty tight and occasionally I wondered if I would make it. However, with the support of my wife Barbie, advertising, phoning, networking, using the Excel on Steroids workshops (also developed by Alchemex in response to their market’s need for specialised Excel training) as a way to get my skills known, and with the much-appreciated support of the Sage Pastel community in Port Elizabeth, the company grew.

Soon my increased admin work and success in marketing the Excel on Steroids training meant that I had to recruit a PA.

Business Partner
Flexcel Reporting

Industry
Business Intelligence

System
Sage Intelligence

“My company was finally going places thanks to the product started by three guys in a garage in Durban.”

Mike Perks,
Owner,
Flexcel Reporting.

Not long afterwards, the work started to outgrow the hours I had available and I wondered if I could afford to add a consultant to our small staff. Even though the product was priced at a ridiculously low price per licence, I had dreamed of monthly incremental passive income growing at a rate where I could retire in couple of years.

Then, just as my income seemed sustainable, things changed. Sage Pastel incorporated Alchemex as a module into the Pastel accounting product; the Pastel Business Intelligence Centre (now Sage Pastel Intelligence Reporting). Accpac (now Sage 300 ERP Intelligence Reporting) followed suit. It now made sense for the accounting package software dealers to sell the Intelligence Reporting license. Application sales dried up and my business stood on a precarious precipice.

So we adapted. The obvious flip side of the coin was the increased market. Suddenly the whole Sage Pastel machine was marketing the Alchemex reporting tool. It was now linked to the credibility of a tried and tested product. More people needed consulting. Demand grew. My company was finally going places thanks to the product started by three guys in a garage in Durban.

Flexcel Reporting in Port Elizabeth now has six staff. Four full time Sage Certified Professionals are kept busy by the demand created by the Sage Intelligence product and the creation of databases to complement the reporting base. What a wonderful journey!

About Sage Alchemex

Sage Alchemex was acquired by the Sage Group plc in 2011. The reporting tool previously known as Alchemex Smart Reporting is now called Sage Intelligence.

Sage Intelligence gives you a meaningful view of information from across your business, delivering automated reports in Microsoft® Excel® as and when you need them. Sage Intelligence integrates with your Sage Accounting or ERP software package, pulling data directly from the database, so you get the latest information in a format you choose without all the time-consuming data extracts and preparation. The reports are fully customizable with drill-down capabilities, allowing for enhanced collaboration and decision making.

Sage Intelligence is the Sage Business Intelligence solution for Sage 50 Accounting - U.S. Edition, Sage 50 Accounting - Canadian Edition, Sage 100 ERP, Sage 300 ERP, Sage 500 ERP, Sage PFW ERP, Sage ERP X3 (Financial Reporting), Sage Evolution, Sage Pastel Partner and Xpress, Sage Pastel Payroll, Sage One Accounting, and Sage VIP, serving close to 100,000 paying customers worldwide.

For more information please go to: www.sageintelligence.com.

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