



Left to right: Graham Dickinson and Dominic Batty

APPS AND SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTS

AS 2019 CLOSED WITH ANOTHER SOLID YEAR FOR THIS SOFTWARE HOUSE, WE TALK TO GRAHAM DICKINSON AND DOMINIC BATTY OF ABACA SYSTEMS AND DISCUSS WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR 2020.

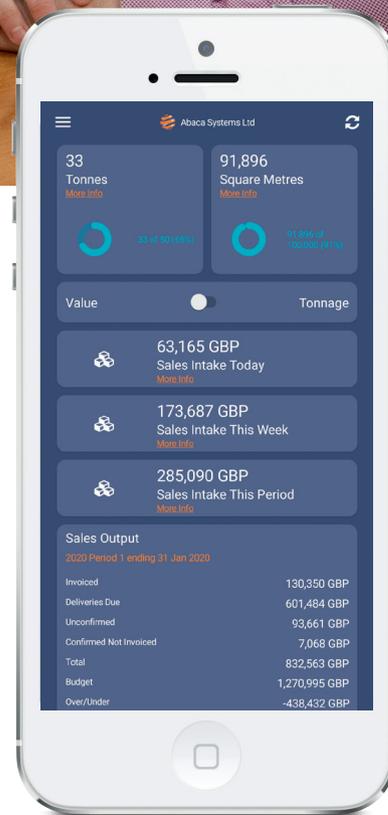
A name well known in the corrugated industry, Abaca Systems is a privately owned software house, based in Ormskirk, Lancashire. The company was established in 1991 by Alan and Barbara Cartwright, who are still the majority owners today. At the helm though, are Joint Managing Directors, Graham Dickinson and Dominic Batty.

“We had a solid year in 2019,” says Dickinson. “Thanks to a mixture of increases in licence sales as well as some new orders, we saw a strong order book that delivered good levels of profit. We also managed to win some new sites and there have been a few companies who rolled out our multi-site solutions as well.”

He continues, “New business came from several key installations, both in South Africa and the UK. For example, we did a complete installation at Right Corrugated in Johannesburg, which is a privately owned sheet plant and also at Corruseal’s plant in Port Elizabeth; this one integrated with the group system nicely. In the UK, we installed our solution at Package In Ltd, the sheet plant in Haverhill, as well as Pitreavie Packaging in Scotland. Looking ahead to this year, we already have a two-plant roll out scheduled for Carton Manufacturers Ltd in Nairobi.”

Updates Too

As with any software, additions to the suite, as well as upgrades to existing components are essential.



“The corrugated industry might be a mature sector, but it still needs development of the software to ensure our users get the most out of the system,” says Batty. “For example, there will be a couple of updated and new products this year, including a feedback component for Portal 3000 specifically for sales reps to record their customer visit notes and also a facility to import customer orders directly into Packaging 3000.”



Portal production graph

In 2019, Abaca launched a dedicated smart-phone app for Portal 3000, which customers’ have been giving to their sales teams. “So far, we have over 30 companies signed up and using the smart-phone app with Portal 3000,” confirms Dickinson. “The app is ideal for sales reps on the road as well as senior management, as the dashboard view allows them to track important data such as sales figures or customer order status.”

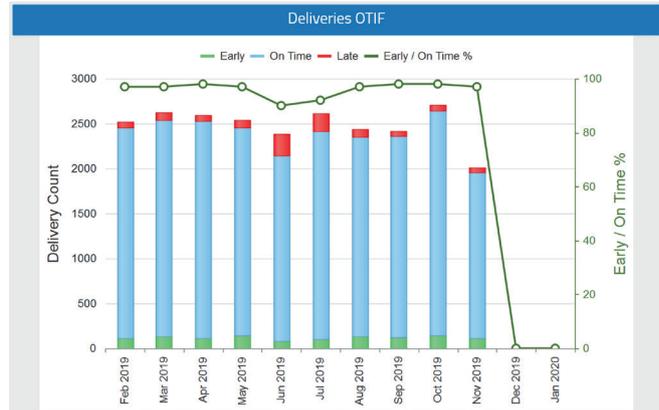
Drivers app soon to be released

3 Total, 1 Complete, 2 OS

Delivered to: Profile Fabrications (Dropped)
 Unit 17 Westfiller Ind Est, Drayton Road, Liverpool, L5 8WJ
 25 Jun 2019 10:00
 10 Loads, 1,421 Weight

Delivered to: HOTPLATE TECH (On Truck)
 Unit 12 Harwood Way, Peel Street, Warrington, LANCs, WN2 8WJ
 25 Jun 2019 12:00

Dashboard, Drops, Settings, About



Portal Deliveries OTIF

With mobile access being a key driver for the company, Abaca is also releasing a truck driver’s app in the New Year. This specific app will allow transport and logistics drivers to communicate their journey progress back into the system, providing real-time data on where a specific load is. By way of a bar code, the drivers can also see a list of loads and show the delivery routes, as well as showing status of the actual truck loading, prior to departure.

Shop Floor Data

“In February, we are installing our new Shop Floor Data Collection – SFDC – system at Pridepak, a sheet plant in Johannesburg,” explains Dickinson. “This new SFDC links directly into the plant’s machinery and provides valuable real time data such as feed rate, run speed and output details. The first machine to be linked in will be Pridepak’s new EMBA casemaker and management are hopeful that the automated SFDC will help them maintain high levels of OEE throughout the plant.”

Paper Reduction

“Our ultimate goal is to help reduce the amount of paperwork, especially in the transport department,” adds Batty. “For example, the latest version of our software allows users to consolidate load sheets into one

document per vehicle, as well as creating single delivery notes per customers, rather than per order or job. We want to help streamline the delivery process as much as possible. We are also rolling out a new android app for scanners within the RF3000 bar coding system – again, trying to make day-to-day jobs as easy as possible.”

“We are excited by the opportunities for the year ahead,” says Dickinson. “As well as working on updates, revisions and new solutions, we have also been investing inside our own business. For example, we now have real-time screens within our support office in the UK office, that shows all customers’ system status and records any communication failures or system outage – this way, we can be proactive and work with our customer IT departments to ensure maximum uptime and productivity from our systems at all time.”

Batty concludes, “We have also employed new team members for our helpdesk, which is now manned by four full time staff in the office and one remote staff member, meaning a dedicated team of five. Additionally, we have grown the field staff to five, with four in the UK and one in South Africa. Our Development team now has six full time and two part time members, all of which benefits our customers moving forward.” ■