



Case study

Essential Christian



Essential Christian provides resources and inspiration for Christian churches in the UK and overseas through events, music and song publishing and professional services. Its activities include the Spring Harvest event and third-party event management.

The challenge



Moving from an over-complex system to something powerful but simple

The finance team at Essential Christian spent a lot of resource – heavy hours on data entry chores – but it wasn't because the software was too basic. In fact, the system was designed for big businesses.

"We'd moved from Access Dimensions to the cloud-based version, Access Financials," says Trevor Pearce, Finance Director. "But they were charging us a high fee that we could no longer justify paying as a charity, for a package that was far in excess of what we needed."

Jonathan Barnes, Finance Coordinator, adds: "I think it was designed for much bigger organisations, where there are three or four people on each purchase ledger or sales ledger, putting in data all day long – so data entry was much more labour-intensive."

The Essential Christian team deals with a large volume of day-to-day work involving payments, purchase ledger, handling expenses and processing income. The nature of running a music publishing operation means that incoming payments can vary from pennies for tracks streamed on Apple Music to more than £100,000 from some larger customers.

"There's quite a variety there and it's a lot of income to be identified and processed," says Jonathan. In the world of music publishing, invoicing often has to be done after the income arrives. "We don't know when a song we own will be played or where it's being played," says Trevor.

"We get the income from various outlets and then we have to account for the income retrospectively."

This kind of complexity kept Jonathan bogged down in data entry. "The software also didn't talk to the bank accounts very well – so bank reconciliations involved putting a lot of data in first before you could even get to the reconciliation part," he says.

Previous system: Access Financials



The solution



Huge time savings seen immediately

The Essential Christian team thoroughly researched the options, consulting accountants and other stakeholders before drawing up a shortlist of three possible finance systems. “We went out to each of those three vendors, talked through our requirements with their representatives and had demos,” says Trevor. “After discussing it, we decided to have further meetings with iplicit and to put the other systems aside as they weren’t quite able to fulfil the functionality we needed.

“For those of us who were involved in the demonstration process, iplicit was quickly moved to the top of the list. We also spoke to another charity that we had a relationship with and that used iplicit and they were very happy to give us their feedback on the system, which also helped in our decision making process.”

The factors that put iplicit in a class of its own included its automation features and the intuitive interface. “It’s the usability of iplicit that I liked,” says Jonathan.

Trevor adds: “We enjoyed working with the iplicit people right from the start. We found them very helpful, very open to talking to us and very honest about what the system could do and what it couldn’t. It just seemed from the start that a good relationship was built and it’s been that way ever since.”

That good relationship continued through implementation. “Our needs were quite complex but Ian Ross, our trainer, was brilliant. We couldn’t speak highly enough of him,” says Trevor.

Jonathan adds: “It was a good two-way conversation throughout. It was about moulding the system to fit us as well as us learning from iplicit. It was good to have that two-way process, rather than just be taught about the system.”

“We achieved some huge time savings straight away,” says Jonathan. Tasks like accounts payable and bank reconciliation were transformed by iplicit’s automation features.

“Bank reconciliation is the big one. It’s such an intuitive, one-step process now, with bank accounts updated in real time,” says Jonathan.

- Big time savings on tasks such as bank reconciliation and accounts payable
- Drastically reduced data entry workload
- Revenue from pennies to £100,000 payments processed with ease

The outcome

Less time on processing and more time on high-value work

The impact of automating everyday tasks has been huge. “It’s changed my job. I’m spending less time processing and more time involved with people, doing the parts of the job I find more interesting,” says Jonathan.

“The daily inputting of data and the daily managing of the system is much more intuitive, much easier than it used to be. I was doing so much data entry with Access Financials that I don’t need to do any more.”

Trevor adds: “It’s transformed things like partial VAT, which used to be a complicated task and is practically ticking a box now; and how iplicit handles prepayments and deferred income are also much more straightforward.”

The team intends to build on its early successes with iplicit to save even more time. Trevor adds: “We have absolutely no regrets about making the change and we’d certainly recommend the system to anyone we spoke to.”

