

Success Story

Tech-first plumbing company removes blockages in its information pipeline

Morningside Plumbers uses Sage Business Cloud Accounting to operate in real-time 24/7/365

Lior Solomons is a qualified and registered plumber. After completing a BCom and MBA, he took over an established plumbing business, but rather than working in the business, fixing taps and leaks, he works on his business, always looking for ways to improve his operations, systems, and customer service.

Morningside Plumbers was established in 1997. When Lior took ownership in 2013, it had already been in business for 16 years, offering domestic and commercial plumbing installation and maintenance services in the greater Johannesburg, Centurion, Midrand, and Pretoria areas. The business has grown from one plumber and one assistant, to six plumbers and five assistants who pride themselves on providing fast, efficient service using the latest plumbing technology and business management software.



Key outcomes

- Easy access to real-time customer and business information, from anywhere
- Shortened sales cycle, from days to minutes
- Lower staff, office space, and stationery costs
- Ability to track job progress and expenses in real-time

Sage

Company
Morningside Plumbers

Location
South Africa

Industry
Other Services

Sage Products
Sage Business Cloud Accounting



About Morningside Plumbers

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In the dark, at 2am

A business that operates 24/7/365, like Morningside Plumbers, needs anytime, anywhere access to its information. But it didn't have that, which was a problem when it got emergency call-outs at 2am on a Saturday morning.

"Our customer and inventory information was stored on a fixed terminal in the office. Accessing our database and sales history remotely was a hassle because of unstable and unreliable Internet connections and hardware issues," says Lior. "It was a very inefficient way of operating because we often had to ask customers to resubmit their information before a job could be completed."

To keep the business running while he was away from the office, Lior kept two books with him at all times: one to record customer and job information, and one to book appointments, allocate teams, and store handwritten job cards. "Everything was written down and transferred to the desktop solution the next working day.

This duplication of effort was time-consuming and delayed invoicing by up to 36 hours."

For example, a job that was completed on Friday would be entered into the system on Monday. The client would only receive an invoice on Tuesday or Thursday – the days that the accountant was in the office.

"Because of the delay in invoicing, customers who paid upfront would still get a statement the following day saying they owed us money, when they didn't," says Lior.

Manual, repetitive, paper-heavy processes were slowing his business down. Lior knew things had to change when he drove off with his two business-critical books on the roof of his car. Had he not retraced his steps and found them in the road, he would have lost everything. "Those books contained sensitive and confidential information about my clients and my business. It was a wake-up call that our system was completely inefficient."



Unblocking the flow of information

Morningside Plumbers tested different job card software packages, but none met its needs.

“We were already using Sage’s online accounting package, so when I found out that I could integrate Sage’s cloud accounting software with an Independent Software Vendor (ISV) like Eworks Manager, it transformed our business.”

Lior’s main reason for moving into the cloud was to get anywhere, anytime access to his information. But he says he wasn’t prepared for the unintended benefits.

“Now, as soon as our plumbers close a job on Eworks, my accountant can send an invoice to the customer in minutes, from home, because she can access Sage on her phone. Rather than coming into the office twice a week to manually check bank statements, everything is now imported and accurately captured in Sage, including supplier invoices, bank statements, and customer invoices. We get paid faster; our cashflow is healthier. Sage has simplified the entire financial process.”

Another of Lior’s requirements for a business management solution was ease of use. “Some of my staff are tech-savvy, others aren’t. I needed something that was easy to use in the field. Today, all my plumbers carry a tablet. As soon as a job is logged, our customers get sent a quote, appointment confirmation, and Ts&Cs. Plumbers are allocated to the job and the customer is alerted via SMS when they are on their way. I truly believe that our partnership with Sage and its ISVs set our customer service apart.”

Layered benefits, from job card to invoice

The more Morningside Plumbers explored the features and functionality offered by Sage and its ecosystem of ISVs, the more benefits it realised.

“As we master one layer – like access to information and then invoicing – we discover another layer within Sage and the ISV offerings. In Sage, we recently activated the purchase order and payroll modules; in Eworks Manager, the inventory system, which has helped us to save on staff and floor space costs and enables us to pay our staff and submit to SARS, accurately and on time.”

“When I started out, my expectations were simple: I needed a cloud-based daily operational system. Now that we’re using all these layers, my expectations have been exceeded beyond my wildest dreams. We actually cannot function without Sage and its ISVs. There’s a solution for just about anything that I want to do. And, if I can’t find what I’m looking for, Sage and its partners are always open to new ideas that will benefit its users.”

Morningside Plumbers today uses multiple ISVs in the Sage ecosystem, all of which streamline and make the business’s operational processes more efficient, says Lior. “There’s no single solution that lets me do everything I need to, but because I can plug into all these other platforms, Sage comes close. As long as we can continue to grow, I’m happy.”



“I cannot even conceive how we worked without these platforms before.”

Lior Solomons

Owner, Morningside Plumbers

Real-time business, focused on the future

The switch to the cloud has saved Morningside Plumbers thousands in staff, office, and stationery costs. The team is no longer desk-bound and can access information, generate quotes, and issue invoices on the go, from anywhere, the sales process was increased 10-fold.

“We work in real-time, and with the ability to track our team’s progress throughout the day, which is crucial in tough business and economic times. We can also give our customers relevant, real-time information. We also track our expenses in real-time, which means we don’t lose a cent to non-invoiced items.”

For Lior, it’s all about the data. “I really get deep into the information, which I was never able to do before. I’m always analysing, looking, seeing, and trying to find better ways to do things. What other ISVs can I implement? What’s the next move? We’re in a position where it’s so simple to scale because we have systems that will allow us to grow without the worry of how. We can effortlessly add members to our system and continue to run and manage the business without any hassle. I cannot even conceive how we worked without these platforms before.”

His biggest highlight? “Showing people my online diary, which I can’t leave on the roof of my car.”

Lior’ advice for businesses thinking of moving to the cloud is not to implement an entire technology stack in one go, unless you have the assistance of Sage’s network of tech-savvy accountants, advisors, and business partners.

“Start with the basics. Learn, test, and become proficient in one layer of a product at a time. You’ll fail very quickly if you try and use every function of a product from the outset. Rather, take it slow and be pleasantly surprised.”



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