



## **Case study: Quarry saves time and money with SoftCo on-demand**

The McGrath Quarry Group is a family business that operates out of two quarries in County Mayo, producing 500,000 tons of ground limestone annually that is used in around 50 products. Since 1998 the company has also expanded into tar macadam production. The firm employs 61 people and is run out of its head office in Cong, County Mayo, Ireland.



### **The Challenge**

With a fleet of 25 vehicles, a critical part of the business is transporting products to its customers in the west of Ireland. The sales and delivery cycle produces around 30,000 documents each year that were handled manually in a paper-intensive process.

The invoicing part of the cycle depends on the delivery docket which must be signed by the customers before the driver returns to the office. The Proof of Delivery (PoD) document is crucial for raising an invoice and for addressing any subsequent invoice queries.

As with any manual process, paper records inevitably get lost or misplaced, often at the customer end. McGrath Quarry Group would frequently receive calls from customers looking for PoD copies when theirs go missing.

In the company head office it was the responsibility of Office Manager Linda McGrath to file the PoD dockets, physically attach them to the relevant invoice at the end of each month and to retrieve them if problems arose, a time-consuming process that could slow down the payment cycle.

PoD retrieval was a recurring problem for one particular group of customer, farmers who use lime from the McGrath quarries to improve the pH balance of their soil. To receive a subsidy from the Department of Agriculture they have to provide receipts or proof of purchase. The application process might occur two years after the delivery, when they would come back to McGrath's and request a record of the transaction. Old files had to be searched and it was labour intensive work.

Like a lot of organisations, the McGrath Quarry Group was also looking to improve its Accounts Payable (AP) process. Having invested in new accounts software it was looking for a solution that could integrate payable invoices into the system to gain better visibility and control over money owed.

**For further information about SoftCo on-demand:**

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## The Solution

Recognising the inherent problems of a paper-based process, McGrath made an initial investment in a scanner and basic document management software, but it proved to be inadequate. "The system was too slow at retrieving the information but it pointed us in the right direction," said Linda McGrath.

On a recommendation from another business, the company contacted SoftCo and in December 2008 moved its PoD and Accounts Payable process over to SoftCo on-demand.

Declan McGonigle, Business Development Manager at SoftCo, explained the appeal of the Software as a Service solution to McGrath. "They didn't have any capital costs to upgrade on-site infrastructure, they just signed up to a monthly fee. What they now get is clear visibility and control."

He said that this was becoming more important to more businesses. "In the good times, when there is more money around, the payment process attracts less scrutiny but when everything is tighter and cash flow is king, firms need to know when invoices are likely to be paid and who they owe money to."

In McGrath, dockets are now scanned to an internal server where the information is matched with information from the company's accounts package. The data is then uploaded to SoftCo on-demand where it can be easily retrieved using various search criteria, such as invoice number, date or product details.

Using the solution was also easy. Linda McGrath found the web-based software "very user-friendly and intuitive" and it has transformed her job, particularly around some of the more demanding customer requests. County Councils, for example, are large volume customers that may generate 200 hundred delivery dockets in a month and frequently come looking for PoD copies before paying an invoice.

"Originally we had to search out the paperwork manually. It got a little better with the first system because we could email the dockets directly, but each one had to be sent separately so there were hundreds of emails going out to just one customer," explained McGrath. "The SoftCo solution is much quicker and simpler."

SoftCo on-demand Proof of Delivery allows users to retrieve all the invoices and combine them on a single PDF file with no need for any other attachments. "It's clean and simple. Within two or three minutes we can turn it around and send it to the customer which is a massive saving on time," she said.

For the smooth and efficient management of supplier invoices, SoftCo on-demand Accounts Payable has been similarly

beneficial, speeding up the approval process and avoiding any late payment penalties.

The solution comes into its own during the company's regular audits, according to McGrath. The firm's accountant is constantly on the phone looking for copies of invoices which can now be retrieved and emailed in minutes.

## The Benefits

SoftCo on-demand has delivered tangible benefits for the McGrath Quarry Group, relieving the organisation of the hassle around paperwork without incurring IT infrastructure costs or licensing fees.

PoD and AP documents are all stored securely in one place electronically, where they can be tracked or retrieved using browser-based software. "SoftCo's portfolio speaks for itself. They work for banks and hospitals that have data that is far more confidential than ours," said Linda McGrath.

The system has proved easy to use and any issues that have arisen have been quickly resolved. "The SoftCo support service is brilliant," said Lind McGrath. "They always acknowledge a query by email within 30 minutes and are very proactive with follow-up phone calls. They stay on top of it until they know we are satisfied that the issue has been dealt with."

The company's customers also benefit from a better service, an important factor in difficult economic times where strong customer/supplier relationships become even more important.

The McGrath Quarry Group had made a strategic decision to invest in new technologies during a downturn, seeing an opportunity to bed it in more easily. "Even though the economy is tough you still have to try and improve yourself," said Linda McGrath, "and you have more time to get to grips with new investments and get more out of them."

SoftCo's Declan McGonigle stressed that there was also a good business case for making the investment in difficult times: "When money is tight, firms need more control and visibility over all their financial transactions. SoftCo on-demand was designed with this very much in mind."

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