

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

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# UNLOCKING VISIBILITY WITH COLLECTIONS AUTOMATION

Esker's Collections Management solution streamlines efforts to improve visibility and enable sustainable business growth at AS Colour.

## AT A GLANCE

# AS Colour



Garment manufacturing



Established 2005



300+ employees



Headquarters: Auckland,  
New Zealand



ERP: MYOB Exo

# CHALLENGES

## Manual activities hamper AR team's efforts to achieve customer excellence

AS Colour manufactures premium, unbranded clothing that is mainly sold wholesale. The company was founded in 2005 by Lawrence Railton in Auckland, New Zealand, but has since spread worldwide, from Australia to the U.S. and into the U.K. and Europe. The company's strong social engagement — with its socially and environmentally responsible production — was one of the key pieces that led to its global success story.

Growing a business, especially internationally, never comes without its challenges. At AS Colour, it was the technology gap of existing finance systems and processes that posed a hurdle to efficient operations. AS Colour relied on a largely manual and cumbersome process to manage its collections. And with the shared service support team based in New Zealand, it was crucial to have a true global solution to streamline processes and improve both the accounts receivable (AR) team's productivity and customer communication.

AS Colour's collections process demanded constant back-and-forth communication with customers. According to Cameron Irons, Director of Finance at AS Colour, "We used to get a lot of queries from customers requesting to resend an invoice because they lost it in their emails. The only way that a customer could get anything from us was obviously by ringing or by email, which takes time and resources."

To keep up with the company's expansion and improve customer communication, AS Colour understood that it would benefit from enhanced automation. The company began the search for an automation solution that could bring greater visibility, reduce errors and support the fast-

growing company on a global scale. Mr. Irons arrived at the company at a critical time: the COVID-19 pandemic was just around the corner, and he was placed in charge of introducing the new solution, all alongside the company's rapid growth.

## OBJECTIVES



**Gain visibility & control** over collections process & performance



**Eliminate** paper-based processes



**Reduce time** spent on customer inquiries



**Improve collaboration** with customers to accelerate collections



**Standardise processes** across global entities



**Improve** customer satisfaction





**The way the Esker team managed the implementation with their support and patience was outstanding.**

**Cameron Irons**

**Director of Finance, AS Colour**

## SOLUTION

**Gaining new levels of visibility by bringing everything together**

To automate the manual tasks prevalent in the company's collections process, AS Colour turned to Esker's Collections Management solution that combines process automation and CRM properties. Implementation began in September 2019 and all four countries were live by March 2020. The timing could not have been better as New Zealand went into its first COVID-19 related lockdown that same month.

Training the staff on the new solution was an easy process, even for the teams located outside New Zealand. Because Esker's Collections Management solution is cloud-based, everyone was able to access the solution easily, even remotely, rather than having to log into multiple servers, which enabled them to pick it up quickly. The team was especially excited about the solution's built-in help function. According to Mr. Irons, "there are some really good resources in there on how to do pretty much everything," which continues to be very helpful as the team is working on creating new types of reports and digging deeper into the solution's functionalities. An example that stood out was finding out how to allocate a credit that had already been applied. The answer was easily found.

For customers, the learning curve for using Esker's customer portal was very smooth as well. Although humans do not necessarily like change very much, AS Colour transformed a steep learning curve for customers into a smoother experience by creating instruction manuals and how-to guides about how to make payments over the customer portal. Getting the customers to use the portal and make timely payments was critical, because for



many of them, AS Colour is a priority supplier. If shipments were stopped due to non-payment, not only would AS Colour lose business, but the customer would also lose their main income source. Once Esker's solution was implemented, the customers saw that it greatly improved their relationship with AS Colour.

# RESULTS

## Tech that drives growth

In the last two years that Esker's solution has been live, what has been most significant for Mr. Irons and the other users are the intangible benefits the solution offers. AS Colour jumped into this project not because the business had specific KPIs to meet or the team was overwhelmed with the workload itself, but to close the technology gap by embracing technological innovation and digitalising the AR processes to efficiently support the company's worldwide growth.

Internal and external visibility provided by Esker's Collections Management solution has made the biggest impact at AS Colour. Key metrics available at the touch of a button help AS Colour analyse collections performance. "It gives me the peace of mind to log into the solution once or twice a week and have a look at how the collections are going both at a consolidated level and customer-by-customer basis. So having that visibility and transparency is a true game-changer for us," said Mr. Irons. Whether he is looking at group level data or drilling down into each country, the intuitive dashboards containing important metrics give him access to all the information he is looking for at any moment.

Given AS Colour is experiencing rapid growth, it has become even more critical to manage working capital. Esker's Collections Management solution helps them monitor cash and manage risk effectively. Of course, the pandemic also took its toll at AS Colour, but Esker's solution continues to help the company immensely in weathering that storm. As was the case for many businesses, when the first lockdown hit, many were underequipped for remote work. Luckily for AS Colour, Esker's solution was already up and running. Having a cloud solution in place that everyone could access from

their home computers for the interim was a lifesaver. As were the automated payment reminders and account statements that went out directly to customers.

The results of using Esker have been transformational not only for AS Colour's employees but also for its customers around the world. With 24/7 access to their invoices, account statements, credit and messages, Esker's portal gives customers the autonomy and convenience they expect while saving the Customer Support team's time. Customers can now log into their account and get access to all pertinent information themselves. Mr. Irons noted that in this case not hearing from customers is one of the topmost benefits of implementing Esker's Collections Management solution: even though there has been some positive feedback from customers about how easy to use the customer portal is, AS Colour feels that in this case not hearing from customers is a good sign. Customers can now manage everything themselves without having to request information: login, get a PDF, view invoices, make payments, schedule payments, get statements and apply credits. Since everything works as intended, AS Colour's global support team has noted a sharp decline in previously fielding 50 to 100 daily requests for invoices or up-to-date statements. Having such an efficient and straightforward way to communicate with customers and being able to proactively address any potential issues is a fantastic position to be in, according to Mr. Irons.

Making the customer and supplier interactions easier while removing inefficient processes squares with AS Colour's commitment to socially and environmentally responsible conduct. Esker's cloud solution reduced paper and equipment use and created more harmonious and meaningful interactions with customers. Going forward, AS Colour plans to fine-tune the reporting to find efficiencies, another feature that Esker's AI automation addresses effectively. Equipped with these tools, AS Colour can continue to bring quality products to markets all around the world.



Having access to information and having it all be visible in a user-friendly way has been huge.

**Cameron Irons**  
Director of Finance, AS Colour

### KEY BENEFITS



**Reduced time** spent on tracking overdue customers & invoices



**Improved visibility** — by customer, by country & at global level



**Enhanced customer experience & communication**



**Provided peace of mind** & reduced stress during challenging times



**Standardised processes** across global entities



# Want to automate your collections process like AS Colour?

Our team is at your service.

## GET IN TOUCH WITH ESKER

### ABOUT ESKER

Esker is a global cloud platform built to unlock strategic value for finance and customer service professionals, and strengthen collaboration between companies by automating the cash conversion cycle. Founded in 1985, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. Our customers use our cloud solutions to increase the efficiency, productivity and visibility of their Procure-to-Pay (P2P) and Order-to-Cash (O2C) processes.

[info@esker.com](mailto:info@esker.com) • [www.esker.com](http://www.esker.com)

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