

# Big Bale Co (South) Ltd.

## Niche Dealer Builds Strong Reputation with Ibcos Gold



An agricultural square baling equipment dealer founded in Hampshire, Big Bale Co (South) Ltd has technicians based not only in Hampshire, but also in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Priding itself on superb customer service, Big Bale has sold more than 1,000 new machines since its inception 33 years ago. Now with an impressive 35% of the Massey Ferguson's UK baler market share, Big Bale has 12 dedicated and highly skilled employees who are available to cover all breakdowns, warranty work and general servicing throughout the UK.

Big Bale carries an extensive stock of genuine spares for delivery throughout the UK and operates seven days a week during the straw harvest. One of the country's premier dealers of Massey Ferguson balers, Big Bale has also been using Ibcos Gold since before the turn of the millennium and is convinced that Gold keeps it current in a niche industry.

### **Knowledge, Response and Ibcos Gold: The Key to Unbeatable Customer Service**

From the moment Big Bale Co (South) Ltd was established in the early 80s, customer service was always right at the top of the list of things at which they wanted to excel. As well as having the right machines for the right people, what was paramount was providing service and support to those people whenever it was required.

They knew from the start, and from their own experience, that the reputation of a service department can literally make or break a dealership. So they set out ensure that their customer service was not only the best they could offer, but also streets ahead of the competition.



### Customer Profile:

- Agricultural baling equipment dealer – Massey Ferguson
- 35% of Massey Ferguson's baler market share across the UK
- 33 years in business
- 12 employees
- Ibcos customer since pre 2000
- Runs Ibcos Gold 6.4; classic system.

"It's all about customer service and the quality of your response, every single time."

**Michael Coleman**  
Owner

The way they did this, as Owner, Michael Coleman puts it, came down to two things: "Knowledge and response." According to Michael, it was essential that all staff had the know-how to help in any given situation. "Whoever picks up the phone," he explains, "has to be able to improve the situation." And when Michael says "whoever picks up the phone", he certainly includes himself. "If someone needs a part and we happen to be closed, I'll put the part in my car and deliver it myself. Customer service is absolutely key to surviving in this industry, so we know we have to make every second count."

In order to guarantee delivery of parts as quickly as possible, Big Bale have to have those parts in stock. As Michael points out, "We also have so many parts for balers - over half a million - that sometimes when they run out, Massey Ferguson come to us for spares."

Not only that, but Big Bale also have six vans that are ready to travel anywhere in the UK to fix balers. "Our chaps will leave at 4am to be on a farm by 7, seven days a week," says Michael. "That's the kind of service we are proud to provide."

Of course, two things are required to make outstanding customer service a reality: one is a genuine desire to excel, which Big Bale have in spades; the other is support from the absolute best dealership management system available. With Ibcos Gold, Big Bale has been able to guarantee that they are never less than 100% aware of exactly where each of their customers stand. This means they know exactly what their customers' requirements are - sometimes even before the customers themselves do - and are able to deliver a personalised and dedicated approach every time.

## A Natural Born Fixer: An Interview with Michael Coleman

In 1983, I spotted a niche in the baler market, and started importing the machines from America. I've seen great changes and growth over the years, the switch to Ibcos Gold was a significant moment in the company's history. It was the moment when the management system caught up with everything else and the company could finally live up to its own expectations and have the strength of its own convictions.



Big Bale's stores managers

And Big Bale has a great many convictions. One of the things of which Michael is proudest is the fact that his company offer year-long placements to students from the Harper Adams University in Shropshire. "This has proved a real eye-opener," says Michael, "especially for the older generation. Having said that, the whole company really benefits from the influx of young blood, and all the enthusiasm and new ideas that that entails."

So with such a forward-looking philosophy, the future looks good for Michael and for Big Bale, although Michael allows himself a little joke about the worst-case scenario. "We only sell and service balers," he says, "so if the demand for balers were ever to dry up, we might be in a bit of trouble. However, sound judgment, a good attitude, a little bit of luck and a lot of help from Gold have given us a strong foothold in the industry, so at least we'd be one of the last to go!

## How Ibcos Gold Turned Chaos to Calm

Before Big Bale turned to Ibcos Gold, they were using a system called Pegasus to manage their entire business. It was primarily an accounting packing and wasn't particularly suited to an agricultural dealership, so they sought out a replacement system.



A Massey Ferguson baler and the next generation of Transtacker trailers.

Wisely, the first thing they did was to scope out the competition. Michael Coleman takes up the tale. "I asked all the other local dealers what they ran," he says, "and they all recommended Ibcos Gold."

So with Gold's reputation preceding it, Big Bale gave it a shot, and it was a decision that was to prove momentous. Michael recalls the madness that preceded the implementation of Gold: "It had been chaos on our end, which is why I instigated the project. But the support and intuition of the Ibcos team was excellent, and pretty much immediately, the improvements were obvious." Everything Big Bale required of it, Gold managed, and pretty soon it was indispensable.

Today operating without Ibcos Gold would be unthinkable. As Michael points out, "Our parts department uses Gold to order and check stock and to sell point of sale parts. We use the wholegoods module to understand the true cost of things. Our accountant uses Gold to organise and manage receipts and statements, and to run invoices once a week for point of sale or wholegoods."

And when Big Bale had at certain times to adapt to take on board different business models, Gold managed that too, proving its worth again and again. "We're a niche business," says Michael, "not only do we sell new and used balers, but we own machines that we hire out - and Gold was easy to adapt to our specific needs as a baler dealer."

So clearly, for Big Bale and Gold, chaos is so last century.

## Big Bale and Ibcos Gold: The Only Way Is Up, Always



Although Big Bale Co (South) Ltd continues to grow and prosper, changes in the agriculture industry over the past 18 months have brought home the fact that now is one of those tough economic times when the focus has to be on cost. Naturally, if this shift in focus is to mean anything, it must be reflected in the company's long-term technology strategy. "Right now we're doing everything we can to cut and monitor costs," says Big Bale GM Nigel Crossley, "and Gold has been very helpful in that regard."

For Michael, the business needed to be "more instant and automatic", so they issued their entire staff with smart phones, just one small step that has opened up lots of new possibilities. "We have also fitted trackers in the vans so that we can give an ETA without bothering the technician, and in the future," says Michael, "when the time is right, we'd like to integrate Ibcos' Workshop

Scheduler so we can simplify the way we book jobs. I also see a lot of value in the Workshop Barcode Time Clock, which would totally streamline the way we log technicians' time."

With Ibcos on their side, Big Bale Co South shows no sign of slowing down, but as their General Manager points out, "Expansion is a personal journey for everybody." Reputation, however, is always key. "As a dealer," Michael continues, "you have to deal with things, and you have to deal with them well. You get more kudos from solving a problem well than from getting it right in the first place." And Gold is the ultimate problem-solver. In short, Michael really couldn't be happier. "We use Gold daily. We're very happy with it and we wouldn't dream of changing systems."

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## About Ibcos Computers

For the past 38 years, Ibcos has helped agricultural, groundcare, and construction dealers manage their businesses successfully with Gold, a powerful platform based on industry best practices and standards. Gold has earned its reputation as the number one recommended dealership management software, providing single and multi-depot dealers with a consolidated business overview. With Gold, dealers can make better decisions and predict future outcomes based on real-time data.



Ring us today to find out how Ibcos Gold can help you better manage your machinery dealership!