



Smart Ag Services

Defies Downturn with Help of Ibcos Gold

Established in 1998 by former John Deere employee, Colin Smart, Smart Agricultural Services (Smart Ag for short) quickly became the go-to Sales, Parts and Service company for John Deere & JCB agricultural machinery in Dorset. Since then, Smart Ag has gone from strength to strength, setting up branches in Cheddar and Nether Stowey, expanding its business into Somerset, Avon, East Devon and South West Wiltshire, and consolidating its reputation for providing superb customer service.

With three depots, 56 employees and countless satisfied customers, Smart Ag's journey has been one of consistent expansion and exponential success. And with them every step of the way, absolutely integral to the smooth-running of their business, has been Ibcos Gold.

From the Very Beginning, Smart Ag and Ibcos Gold Made an Unbeatable Business Team...

When Colin Smart set out on his own almost two decades ago, selling and servicing John Deere machinery across Dorset, he was already very much aware of the benefits of Ibcos Gold. One of the things he knew from experience was that it was simple to use, and for a technophobe such as himself, user-friendliness was high on his list of priorities. So, as soon as he founded the business, he had Gold installed.

Another priority, and a must-have feature in a dealer management system, is an excellent accounts package. Colin knew that this would allow for easy understanding and almost instantaneous clarification of his company's financial position. He also knew that a clear view of the present was essential if he was to have a clear plan for the future.



Customer Profile:

- John Deere agriculture machinery dealer
- 18 years in business
- 56 employees
- 3 depots
- Ibcos customer since 1998
- Runs End-to-End Ibcos Gold 6.4; with a mixture of Windows and Classic users.

"Colin recognised that having a good dealership management system with a good accounts package enables you to understand your position. In other words, you know where you are. And once you know where you are, you can see clearly where you're going."

Chris Payne, Financial Director
Smart Ag Services

So once Smart Ag was up and running, selling and servicing John Deere machinery, it quickly became clear that what made this company stand out from the competition was its remarkably high level of customer service. From the very beginning, Colin had always been dedicated to ensuring an unbeatable customer experience.

He always understood that if you make your after-sales service a priority, sales become much easier, so speedy service and round-the-clock availability was always crucially important. Thankfully, Gold was on hand to ensure that Smart Ag kept on top of its customers' requirements, making a personalised and dedicated approach a matter of course.

These days, with his business having grown and flourished to an extent that he could only once have dreamed of, Colin is still just as passionate about service and about getting the customer back up and running as quickly as possible, no matter what. This is why when the office is closed, calls are routed to his phone, so that in an emergency, panicking customers are often shocked - but always deeply grateful - when Colin picks up the phone at 4am.

Now that he has other staff to take the pressure off him, Colin's use of Gold is mostly limited to the Dealer Management System, where he presides over inventory and deals, as well as the business paperwork in general. What really impresses him, however, is how for the past 18 years Ibcos Gold has grown and developed alongside his own company, and that today it's just as essential, and as beneficial, as it ever was.

Embracing Change & Generating Organic Growth



Colin Smart, the Founder.



Brand new John Deere combines awaiting maintenance.

By the end of 2010, Smart Ag had undergone some major expansion, not least in November of that year when they joined forces with Ashworth Farm Machinery in Somerset. Then in 2012, as the business continued to grow and cash flow became more critical, Chris Payne was brought onboard, initially as Financial Controller. His role at first was primarily to oversee the accounts and to control end-of-year adjustments, but as Smart Ag's expansion continued, his role became more involved.

Now, even as a relative newcomer to the business, Chris has seen a lot of changes in his time. He also appreciates how the business has grown historically and how the Ibcos management system has played an important part in that growth.

"When the business was originally set up," he says, "we didn't have a lot of faith in multi-depot dealers, which is why a lot of work went into making sure this location served its territory well, which it did, quite successfully. Previously, technicians came in on Monday morning to collect parts and then for the rest of the week they worked remotely in their own territory. That was how we served the area with one location.

"When you get to a certain size, however, you realise there is a benefit of scale – you can centralise functions and costs and not double up on certain areas. Using a dealer management system like Gold helps you to do that. Also, there's a better geographical spread of your engineers, which means you can service the customer a lot quicker and improve

your reputation as a dealer. That's one of the ways we generated organic growth in the market.

"At the end of the day," Chris continues, "if you can provide customers with a solution to their problem as well as an affordable price, then you're doing an excellent job and you're likely to expand."

An Ongoing Relationship: Smart Ag Services' Future with Ibcos Gold

Clearly then, Ibcos Gold's role in the evolution of Smart Ag has been integral. From the very beginning, through the first decade of expansion and the merger in 2010, Gold has been there, ensuring that things run smoothly and that in times of great change behind the scenes, Smart's customers didn't notice a thing, except of course a consequent improvement in service.

But what of the future? Unsurprisingly, neither Colin Smart nor Chris Payne would dream of changing a thing. Except that is, in terms of upgrade, for as they both know, a technological strategy has to evolve alongside a thriving company. This is why Smart Ag are looking to implement the Ibcos Gold Workshop Scheduler module.

As Chris Payne explains, "This will provide us with better staff management by showing us not only our engineers' diaries, but also a record of all booked jobs."

So the relationship between Smart Ag and Ibcos Gold shows no signs of slowing down. Rather, like all good relationships - and let's face it, better than most - it looks set to continue, and to thrive, for the foreseeable future.



"I would say that using Gold is critical for managing your business effectively. You need to be aware of where you are and how you're doing on a regular basis, and Gold, when used well, gives you exactly that information. For us, as well as an excellent overview at any given moment, Gold also gives us a very good feel for the future."

Chris Payne, Financial Director
Smart Ag Services

Chris Payne, Finance Director at Smart Ag, with Jon Fulcher, Sales Director of Ibcos Computers

About Ibcos Computers

For the past 37 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!