

Winchester Garden Machinery

Beats Online and Offline Competition

Winchester Garden Machinery (WGM) are one of the UK'S largest specialist dealers of commercial and domestic machinery, providing customers across the country with some of the best names in the business, including Honda, John Deere, Stihl and Husqvarna. With close to 50 years' experience, 50 employees and now four depots across the south of England, WGM are a family-run business that value close face-to-face relationships with their customers.

Never afraid to embrace change and move with the times, they have a thriving online business that runs alongside their offline activities. Added to which, spread around their four separate retail locations are a domestic garden machinery dealership, a specialist commercial and groundscape team and an arboricultural department - not to mention a full workshop and spares support. Keeping on top of all these activities would be difficult, if not downright impossible, without the best management software. Thankfully, WGM have been using Ibcos Gold since 2000.

How Gold Has Helped Winchester Garden Machinery Deal with Expansion

Winchester Garden Machinery was founded 46 years ago by friends and colleagues, Andrew Hoskings and Robin Nettle. Initially working together for another company, a garden machine manufacturer, they took to repairing local people's machinery in their spare time. As there was a lot of call for their expertise, they decided to make a go of it and set out on their own. Then, as their business continued to grow, they rented a small unit to deal with the demand.

Since then, their expansion has continued apace. Having rented properties for many years, in 1999 they bought their first premise in Winchester and today they have four sites in Hampshire and Berkshire, specifically in Winchester, Liss and Sunningdale. Despite their exponential



Customer Profile:

- Commercial and domestic groundcare machinery dealer
- 46 years in business
- 50 employees
- 4 depots
- Ibcos customer since 2000
- Runs Ibcos Gold 7; with a mixture of Windows and Classic users.

"We would never have been able to manage our expansion so easily without Gold."

Amy Nocetti, Director/Commercial Sales
Winchester Garden Machinery

growth, WGM have remained as focussed on their customers as they were in the very early days when it was just Andrew and Robin fixing people's mowers. They both still make a point of getting to know all of their customers personally - they know what products they've purchased, where they're based, which machines have been serviced and so on.

It is this personal approach that sets WGM apart from many of their competitors, and inspires great pride and loyalty in both customers and staff. Many of their new customers come to them through word of mouth, and once they've experienced for themselves what WGM can offer, they become the next wave of advocates, bringing more customers in turn.

Many of their staff have also been with WGM for decades, some from the very beginning. Their vast experience means that they know their products inside out and are always on hand to provide customers with all of the information and guidance they might need. WGM staff are particularly proud of having kept the business up and running, and consistently doing well and growing, with no redundancies, for almost half a century.

One key thing that changed on WGM's gradual ascent to the top of their industry was the management software they used. Prior to 2000, they were using a system called MapFour, but it quickly became apparent that where WGM were intent on expansion and on moving with the times, MapFour were not. Indeed, it got to the point where the system was no longer being updated and was clearly becoming obsolete, so WGM had no choice but to move on to another system.

Thankfully, they found Ibcos Gold and it immediately became clear that it was a lot more relevant to their business than their old system. The fact that it had been designed by someone who worked in the same industry, someone who knew exactly what WGM were going through, was clear from the start. Since then, WGM and Ibcos Gold have been inseparable.

The Complete Picture in a Classic Gold Frame: An Interview with Amy Nocetti



Inside the brand new warehouse

Amy Nocetti, née Hoskings, is proud to be part of a long-standing family business. Not only has she been with the company for 16 years, but she also happens to be the daughter of one of the managing directors. As for the other managing director, "Robin's son is now part of the business as well", says Amy.

Amy is Director of Commercial Sales for Winchester Garden Machinery and as such, she uses Ibcos Gold on a day-to-day basis. What does she use it for? Well, pretty much everything.

"I use Gold for selling, invoicing, creating workshop jobs, putting stock out and reserving it," she says. "I use the Quick Sales Analysis feature to examine customers' profiles in greater detail. I look into their history and stock levels, and check to see if there are any outstanding jobs. The Classic version of Gold is incredibly easy to use as it's keyboard dependent, which means I can do things without looking or using a mouse. It's a real time-saver for me. I love the Classic view as it's much faster. Personally I think it's the best thing about Gold."

Although there are many different roles at WGM, everyone's daily tasks revolve around their customers, their stock and which workshop jobs are up and running. As Amy sums up, "Gold helps us stay organised and see the complete picture."

Amy is in no doubt that WGM's success in recent years is closely allied with its collaboration with Gold. Recently, WGM upgraded to Gold version 7 and are currently rolling out departmental training to get people up to speed. For Amy, time spent being trained to use Gold to its fullest potential is time she knows they will get back many times over. For this reason, she advises other companies turning to Gold to be sure to take full advantage of the training programmes. "Taking time to sit down with your staff and get fully trained up is definitely well worth the effort."



Winchester's new warehouse

As for other advice for dealers looking to grow their business and reach new levels of success, Amy says, "Choose the products you sell really carefully, get to know your market and most importantly, make sure you know your customers inside out."

Moving With the Times: Online and Offline in Perfect Harmony

As well as selling and servicing garden machinery from four local depots, part of WGM's growth over the past twenty years has seen them setting up a presence online to run alongside their offline business.

Obviously, when they first started out, having an online presence wasn't even an issue, but after the turn of the millennium, it quickly became clear that the Internet was here to stay. It was a case of either getting on board or being left behind, so they decided to get on board.

Rather than just a simple list of their products, however, WGM decided to embrace the internet wholeheartedly and set up two separate online businesses, Mow With Us and Forest And Arb, the latter dedicated to "all your forestry and arboricultural needs", which includes everything from machinery to specialist clothing and climbing equipment. Again, Gold has been essential in keeping track of all these different strands of their business.



Collection of new Honda and John Deere mowers in their showroom

Also, for Amy, it was important that WGM's online presence was not just a site to sell things but more of a reflection of their business as a whole, which meant it had to be warm and welcoming and it had to put people first. So as well as a virtual showroom and an online catalogue, it's a place where personal relationships are encouraged.

"It's part of the nature of the products we sell that you need to be able to interact fully with your customers," Amy explains. "Our website encourages potential customers to get in touch so we can talk them through our online product selection on the phone. We also encourage them to get a feel for the product before they buy it. We do this by demonstrating the product on site."

This refusal to let the internet function merely as an impersonal sales tool with no interactivity is one of the things that makes WGM stand out. "We listen to our customers," says Amy. "We understand what they need and make absolutely sure they choose the product that meets their specific requirements perfectly. Garden machinery is a big purchase and it's

important to us that our customers get it right."

And once again, Gold has been critical in allowing WGM to keep all of these different aspects of their business functioning in perfect harmony.

How Gold's Reporting Capabilities Have Transformed WGM's Working Practises

One of the things that makes Gold so indispensable for WGM is its ability to generate various reports on different aspects of the overall business. This is absolutely crucial as it enables them to analyse the performance of each of their four depots and each of their multiple businesses simultaneously.

Gold generates reports, for example, that home in on specific departments - Sales, Parts, Aftersales and so on - and focus on exactly how each department is operating in each separate depot. This information is invaluable and the WGM management team make a point of sitting down to analyse it on a monthly basis.

But that's just the beginning of how Gold's reports have transformed WGM's working practices.

"We use various reports that show us exactly how the business is doing," Amy Nocetti explains. "They show us, for example, how many units we sold of a specific item over a period of six months to a year. This kind of information is crucial during the winter season when we're planning stock orders for the coming year. It's also great to be able to generate and download reports on sales of specific parts or from a particular manufacturer."

Gold also helps them keep on top of stock monitoring. With such a high turnover of stock, orders are constantly being placed and stock is always on the move - knowing where it is and how each depot is performing with regard to it is essential.

It also allows them to focus on profit, by turning to their customer reports to analyse how much each customer has spent over a certain period of time. And when they want to see how their salesmen are performing - where they are and what they've achieved - Gold can generate reports on that too.

As Amy puts it, "Gold has made it easy for us to manage a growing business."

And as that business continues to grow, WGM's relationship with Gold is only set to become closer still.

"Having switched to the latest version of Gold," says Amy, "we are also thinking of implementing Gold CRM and better use of the doc store facility where invoices can be scanned directly to the Gold system. John Deere have strict guidelines about going paperless, so this will save us printing time and decrease paper consumption into the bargain."

So the future is bright, increasingly green and, naturally, Gold all the way.



"If issues happen to arise with customers or their orders, every order is initialed by the salesman so Gold enables us to resolve the issue quickly and easily."

Amy Nocetti, Director of Commercial Sales
Winchester Garden Machinery

Amy Nocetti, Director of Commercial Sales, Michael Cheyney, Accounts Manager, 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 efficiently manage your machinery dealership!