



## Flexible Finance Expertise When the Pressure's On: Paint Manufacturer

### Case Study

#### At a glance

- A specialist paint manufacturer and distributor in south-central England needed a short-notice interim replacement for its departing Finance Manager
- The timing created additional pressures, as the company was mid-audit, and HMRC year-end submissions were due
- Other challenges included ongoing internal and group reporting deadlines, summer holiday absences, and inexperienced junior Finance staff
- EFM Associate Mark Davis was chosen to rapidly take over the running of the Finance operation until a replacement Finance Manager could be recruited
- Through effective stakeholder communication, Mark managed both deadlines and expectations, delivering the audit and all reporting and submissions, prior to handover to the new Finance Manager

#### Background

With extensive experience across all aspects of accounting, financial management, financial analysis, controllership, and regulatory compliance – and a track record of turning financial losses around – Mark is no stranger to complexity or urgency, and this project certainly required him to hit the ground running.

With just a day's notice, and a couple of hours' worth of handover with the outgoing Finance Manager, Mark was expected to instantly become not only a safe pair of hands for the company's cash flow forecasting, financial reporting, and HMRC relationship, but also project leader for an extremely detailed company audit already underway with a Big Four accountancy company.

Working both on-site and remotely, with the flexibility to deliver additional hours as and when the client and the job required it, Mark immediately set about keeping the Finance ship on an even keel, whilst pragmatically negotiating room for manoeuvre to ensure obligations could be met realistically.

#### Challenge

Mark's understanding of the project requirements was clear, but the client company's particular circumstances presented special challenges, that Mark had to go the extra mile to resolve.

A combination of historical and recent staff turnover, plus summer holiday absences, meant that locating the credentials to access the company's financial systems was often a forensic exercise, and required no shortage of tact and diplomacy.

Many of the Finance systems themselves were also either legacy variants or bespoke developments, which meant that Mark - despite considerable experience in implementing and using industry-standard financial technologies - found himself with an additional learning curve to extract and make sense of the data in them.

These obstacles to accessing and validating data created issues for both critical ongoing forecasting and reporting processes and the audit that was taking place.

Additionally, time and support were in short supply. Deadlines for both local and group monthly reporting were incessant and mounting, HMRC due dates and the audit deadline itself were a source of constant pressure, and the Finance assistant working with Mark was, despite her best efforts, still very much learning the ropes.

## Solutions

In tandem with his efforts to quickly maximise the data he could extract from the Finance systems, in order to better meet reporting deadlines, Mark also adopted a typically pragmatic approach to improving the department's performance.

He broke work down into a manageable tick-list of tasks that could safely be carried out by non-Finance staff, and empowered individuals to take responsibility for them.

Mark also pursued a policy of negotiating with stakeholders to manage their expectations, reduce pressure on the Finance function, and secure better outcomes.

In this way, he successfully obtained an extension from HMRC for accounting submissions, but also put in place financial processes to ensure the following year's submissions would not require a further extension.

Likewise, working closely with the auditors, he persuaded them to pause the audit work temporarily, by clearly demonstrating why some data requests were unrealistic, and proposing workable alternatives in revised time scales.

Internally, Mark ensured the timeliness of reporting was systematically improved, but also introduced "fair warning" procedures to help stakeholders understand when and why reporting might not be punctual, and when they should expect it.

Finally, Mark made sure he invested time and effort in nurturing and mentoring his Finance assistant, building her confidence and competence, and adding value to her ATT studies through practical experience.

## Benefits

Mark's work delivered on all fronts.

The paused audit resumed effectively – as he had shown that it would – and was successfully completed and signed off on Mark's watch.

HMRC submissions were successfully delivered in line with revised deadlines, and previous overpayments were recouped.

Reporting, cash flow forecasting, and other ongoing processes were able to continue seamlessly, and the pressure of deadlines on the Finance function was significantly eased, reducing the risk of error.

It is a measure of the success of Mark's work that he was asked to stay on beyond the original contract, both to hand over to the new Finance Manager and to oversee the signoff of the audit.

And with all the flexibility of an EFM Associate, Mark was only too willing to help.

**For more information on how EFM's experienced professionals can put in place a skilled interim or longer-term Finance function in your business, without the salary costs, get in touch.**



T: 01582 516300

E: [clientcare@efm.uk.com](mailto:clientcare@efm.uk.com)

W: [efm.uk.com](http://efm.uk.com)

