# NO MAN IS AN ISLAND...

## but what about your data?

How removing data islands can transform your Electro-Mechanical business

DATA

# EMIR

Electro-Mechanical Information Resource

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**Successful businesses will know that amongst their biggest assets is their people, but even the most committed teams need to be managed correctly to avoid unintended pitfalls.**

Enthusiastic and effective employees will often do anything to streamline the workload that they are tasked with processing. This is great, but it's also exactly where one of these pitfalls can rear its head in the form of data islands.

When operations-related data is entered into a single document, spreadsheet or separate unconnected system, a data island is created to which others have little or no access. In a modern streamlined business eliminating this exact occurrence should be a priority and thanks to technology, it's a challenge that can be met.

Your data ranks alongside your people as one of the key assets within your organisation, so it's important you take care of both and ensure they are utilised together to maximum effect.

## Finding the right business solutions to DAILY CHALLENGES

As we've already identified, although individuals finding solutions to their daily challenges in a business can suit their own needs, it can also create data islands that will always require individual manipulation if colleagues and the wider business are to obtain a comprehensive view on a situation.

In many cases, the solutions of which we speak are self-written spreadsheets that offer the ability to record elements of workflow and a visible method of current processes. However, with each of these short-term and individual solutions, a long-term business capability is sacrificed.

### SO, WHAT CAN BE LEARNED HERE?

Well, one thing to emphasise is that the motivation of employees to improve processes, efficiency and their individual ability to do their job should never be extinguished. This is where some of the most important learning about your own business originates.
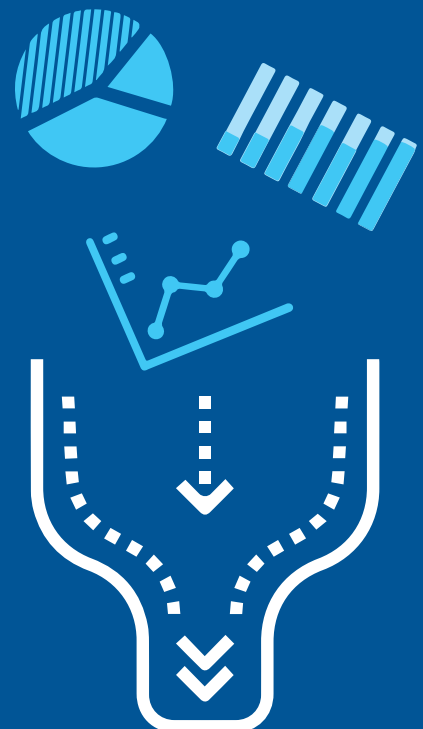
**The identification of bottlenecks or inefficiencies should be encouraged,** but then it is essential there is a process for these to be documented and tackled at strategic business level rather than on the 'shop floor' by the individuals tasked with the operations. This is an approach that benefits everyone.

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Disconnected applications create yet another "data island" that no business can afford.

The next question is how to go about tackling these issues in a way that ensures business-wide improvement and as so often is the case now, technology provides some compelling answers.

In today's software market, it is still impossible for a software company to take on the role of all things to all men, supplying a product that meets the needs of every area of a business. There will always be specialist products that an Electro-Mechanical business will need to use such as computer aided design (CAD), supplier specific spare part online catalogues and even delivery systems which produce carriage notes and track the items on their way to the client.

As discussed earlier in this guide though, a separate and disconnected application creates yet another data island that any business can ill afford. This is why all solutions must integrate seamlessly and effortlessly to the central business system if you are to avoid duplication of effort and inaccurate representations of the business in your data.

Integration is the key. The core business management system you use should have the ability to connect to other software, if that product uses or creates data that is important to the workflow of your service.

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# ON PAPER we've all got a common inefficiency…

From the advent of the computing age, the promise of paperless environments has failed to materialise in the SME sector, even though most modern software applications do help reduce the reliance on printed documents.

## IF THE SOFTWARE IS CAPABLE, WHY DO ALL COMPANIES STILL PRINT, DISTRIBUTE AND COLLATE PAPER?

The time used to produce paper documentation and process it should be a clear indicator of inefficiency, but many of us still find comfort in knowing that a hard copy exists.

However, the step from paper-based to electronic copy is not a large one and relies on buy-in from key stakeholders within the business to the introduction of new working patterns that reduce workload and create a more economic and eco-efficient process.

One reason this buy-in can sometimes be hard to achieve is a perception amongst stakeholders that the resistance to change encountered amongst employees would be disruptive. Ask yourself a question though, then decide whether this perceived resistance might be so severe in reality:

Why, when an engineer is happy to process their entire private life on a smartphone device including diary, internet access, online shopping etc., would they find the collection of information and signature from the client anything else than the appropriate procedure?

Gone are the days of chasing signed delivery notes from on-site engineers or invoicing a client only to find that half of the spare parts used were not recorded. Technology and software solutions offer an easily accessible way to make these delays – along with the subsequent invoice problems, late payments and dissatisfied customers – a thing of the past.

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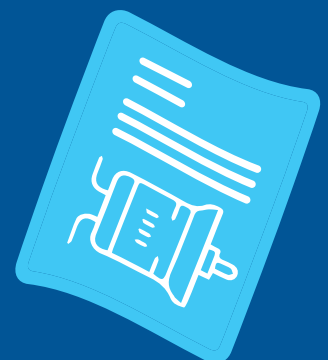
# ELIMINATING THE DATA ISLANDS
## – We're all in this together!…

DATA

When you sell your convictions and vision to a workforce about how the business is going to prosper through the changes you are implementing, an employee will nearly always view it with one key question at the front of their mind – 'What's in it for me?'

This is why it's hugely important for a workforce to understand how change is going to make their lives easier, allow them to complete tasks more efficiently and ultimately, provide satisfaction for work well done.

The idea cannot be the property of management alone. There needs to be a sense of shared ownership within the entire workforce if the collective motivation to change is going to be sufficient to actually achieve it.

It's essential you do involve all your people, because each person is an asset and moving them from one department to another, while being necessary for business reasons, can leave a gap in resources, trust and goodwill that has been built up over time.

### THIS EXACT SCENARIO CAN BE EXPOSED BY ASKING SOME SIMPLE QUESTIONS IN RELATION TO ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS AREAS OR ROLES:

• How do you answer a customer query?

• Where is the answer when something comes up?

• Can anyone easily locate that information?

• Is your workforce capable of thinking laterally and moving from role to role to enhance business operations?

By releasing the islands of data and centralising the place in which processing and data storage takes place, the way that the workforce makes enquiries and deals within the business is standardised. It follows that the border of departments becomes less important, your people can work more flexibly and effectively together, and previous limitations can be overcome.

**By releasing the islands of data and centralising the place where processing and data storage happens** your people can work more flexibly and effectively together, and old limitations can be overcome.

### This all means one thing:
## Sustainable business growth.