Asciano streamlines tax compliance with CCH Tax Integrator

Summary

Company profile
Name: Asciano Limited
Region: Australia and New Zealand
Operation: Transportation
Products: Rail and ports infrastructure, operations and services
Employees: 8,830
Website: http://www.asciano.com
Revenue: $3.842 billion FY14/15

Challenges
• Microsoft™ Excel-based legacy systems
• Increased need to meet compliance demands
• Wealth of information impacting speed of decision making
• Need for real-time, tax-based reporting
• One system for tax team members located across separate offices

Solution
CCH Tax Integrator is a web-based corporate tax provisioning and return software which:
• integrates with existing financial management systems, removing the need to duplicate data
• provides full audit trail capabilities, and effectively manages risk
• consolidates multiple entities with the click of a button and allows for the most complex reporting structures
• provides workflow management tools to efficiently manage and track the tax compliance process, lifting the burden of compliance obligations
• improves monthly, quarterly and yearly tax reporting processes, facilitating better management of cash flow and reducing reporting cycle times
• offers data gathering and reporting capabilities to meet local and global regulatory obligations

Value
• Faster decision making
• Improved reporting processes
• No loss of data
• No hidden information
• High levels of professional excellence
• Highly secure web-based read-only access for external auditors

I cannot imagine running a tax function of the scale and diversity of Asciano without the support of CCH Tax Integrator.
Anne Richardson, Head of Tax, Asciano

CCH Tax Integrator enables the tax accounting team at Asciano, Australia’s largest national rail freight and ports operator, to minimise the time spent gathering, analysing and interpreting tax-sensitive data to meet compliance and reporting demands.

Situation
Employing approximately 8,000 workers nationwide Asciano rank 100 out of 2000 companies in Australia. Formed in 2007 after a demerger from Toll Holdings Asciano owns and manages rail and ports assets. As a leader in the transportation industry Asciano services can be divided under four brands; Asciano, Patrick, C3 Limited and Pacific National.

Asciano is the owner of a unique transport infrastructure portfolio, including 100 percent of the Pacific National and Patrick container ports as well as the combined port operations and stevedoring businesses of Toll and Patrick Corporation.
**Business issues**
Like many companies, most of the businesses that formed Asciano used Microsoft™ Excel spreadsheets to record data for end-of-year tax reporting. The mix of Pacific National, Patrick and Toll businesses also meant that different accounting platforms were used and that historical information was sometimes difficult to locate.

The limitations of Excel as a reporting tool became apparent when Asciano's tax accountants needed to produce tailored internal reports or attempted to consolidate data across multiple entities.

Following the listing of Asciano, Head of Tax, Anne Richardson, was of the view that an effective tax accounting software solution was needed to meet the company's immediate and longer term needs, particularly in managing tax across multiple entities.

The limitations of Excel became more apparent amid calls for stronger financial transparency and more robust accounting resources to reduce manual inputs and double handling.

"CCH Tax Integrator changed our way of thinking on tax reporting. Its automated functions and fully integrated solution significantly improved the quality and diversity of our tax reporting."

Asciano needed to move its tax return spreadsheet system to a fully-integrated, tax-effective accounting solution that could easily roll over and reuse data from tax provision to the tax return function.

The chosen solution needed to accommodate as many automated tax functions as possible to document the company's accounts and make them available for year-on-year review and analysis.

Ideally, the solution would also be web-based for ease of access across Asciano's business units, which are spread across Australia.

**Better outcomes, higher productivity**

The Asciano tax accounting team reviewed various other commercially available options including N-able and PowerTax. However, CCH Tax Integrator was already in use for basic tax return purposes in one of Asciano's business units and Asciano believed it to be superior to the other products, especially in terms of practical support and reliability.

The move to CCH Tax Integrator proved a professional turning point for the Asciano tax team. "CCH Tax Integrator changed our way of thinking on tax reporting," said Anne Richardson. "Its automated functions and fully integrated solution significantly improved the quality and diversity of our tax reporting. The time savings it created allowed us to spend more time on other matters. The business case for CCH Tax Integrator proved self-evident." Asciano has five internal tax staff located across separate offices who access the highly secure CCH Tax Integrator online. They are supported by external auditors and other nominated stakeholders who have read-only access to relevant information.

The tax team manages 80 entity-based tax calculations at year-end including 40 non-trading entities.

CCH Tax Integrator allows them to manage every component of tax information and provides them with the tools to offer accurate information and analysis, on demand. The resources have improved the quality of their internal counsel and created more informed decision-making for senior management. "CCH Tax Integrator really is the source of all tax truth for us in terms of compliance," said Anne. "It has streamlined our tax compliance processes and made the tax accounting function more responsive to corporate needs. It certainly makes you more accountable."

All Asciano's tax accounting calculations are prepared through CCH Tax Integrator. It is used from the time the tax accounting team loads the trial balances at the beginning of the year-end external audit, through to lodging its tax return, through to making amendment requests and developing individual reports.

**Benefits and value**

Since implementing CCH Tax Integrator, the Asciano tax accounting team has improved the quality of its work. It now has one central resource to drive its tax reporting and improved decision-making. According to Anne Richardson all data is captured and nothing gets lost. "All the data is there to roll forward. Everyone knows where to go to gain the tax reporting information they need. There is no hidden information anywhere," she said.

Longer term, Asciano would like to further its use of CCH Tax Integrator to load trial balances and fixed asset information automatically. With CCH Tax Integrator, its tax accounting team has the resources to take its tax accounting function to higher levels of professional excellence.