



Clade brings local tech expertise to Australia's leading ice manufacturer

# Through digital transformation, Bells Pure Ice forecasts staying cool and one step ahead of a hot and competitive marketplace

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## AUSTRALIA'S LEADING ICE MANUFACTURER

On a scorching 40-degree summers day in Australia, you'd be forgiven from not paying much thought to who's providing your essential ice block needs – but provided you're getting the ice needed to keep your food and drinks chilled and ensuring you thrive in the heat then Bells Pure Ice are doing their job.

As Australia's leading ice manufacturer and distributor, Bells Pure Ice (Bells) has been keeping you and your food and drinks cool since 1926. Over the past 20 years the company has grown to a market leading position and is an Australia-wide operation capable of producing more than 1,200 tonnes of ice each and every day – which they then deliver to around 9,000 retail sites (leading supermarkets, petrol stations and bottle shop chains but also independent outlets, large catering chains and industrial clients) all across the country.

The technology platform used by Bells is key to their business operations and includes an integrated CRM, logistics and accounting system as the backbone of the business in terms of replenishment, forecasting and delivery.

“Key staff in every branch use our internal system every day,” says IT Manager Tony Jacoby. “In the middle of summer many hundreds of transactions are going through daily so it's absolutely business critical.”

But in late 2018, Winter was coming!

“We'd been working with an America-based technology provider for several years – but they were changing their business model and could no longer continue to support us,” he says. “We've been working with the underlying technology platform for some time and it has been highly customised and regularly updated over the years, so we thought finding a new partner that was a great fit with us but also understood the underlying technology might present a real challenge.”

## AT A GLANCE

### OBJECTIVES

- > Transition to a new partner to maintain the key business applications and technology platform
- > Streamline forecasting and stock replenishment
- > Simplify and automate invoicing processes

### BUSINESS BENEFITS

- > More efficient and flexible business critical processes
- > Faster response to customer needs
- > Accounts staff have more productive time now they no longer manually enter invoices

## ESSENTIAL TRAITS OF THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIP

Bells is a large company, especially in terms of their Australia-wide distribution network, but when they started their search for a new technology partner, they decided against approaching the biggest vendors in the space. They also knew that they wanted to work with someone in the same time zone.

“We didn’t want to risk getting lost in a portfolio of even larger clients,” says Jacoby. “As well, our previous partners were in the United States, a day behind Australia. That sometimes created communication problems and delays – for instance, if we needed help on a Monday morning and had to wait till Tuesday for a response.”

The nature of the partners itself was also a serious consideration.

“We had a very good relationship with our previous provider – still do,” says Jacoby. “We wanted our new partner to be a team that we got on well with personally - but also capable of having any tough conversations we might need to have.”

## A RIGOROUS SELECTION PROCESS

Bells ultimately appointed Clade Solutions (Clade) as their new partner, but it wasn’t a quick or straight-forward decision. Bells invited more than a dozen companies to submit a support transition proposal before shortlisting four.

“We had either heard about them or received referrals from other people,” says Jacoby. “Clade had been recommended by a communications company we work with. Their skills and experience seemed to be a good fit, we could relate to their other customers and case studies and they also seemed to be the right size.”

Over several meetings the working relationship with Clade developed and a solid rapport was established.

“Our CEO, Alex Abulafia, felt very comfortable with Duncan and I was also very comfortable with the management team he brought along, so we appointed Clade in January this year,” says Jacoby.

“This used to be a very time-consuming manual task for our accounts team to do. Now it’s fully automated, so that was a very big achievement for Clade.”



As a bonus, Bells' previous partner helped with the hand-over process.

"Their head developer came to Sydney for a few weeks and worked closely and very well together with Clade to ensure the transition kicked off successfully," says Jacoby. "I had some concerns that, because Clade were picking up someone else's code and were used to working with more up-to-date technologies, it would be a long and complex job, but it actually went very smoothly."

## IMMEDIATE BUSINESS BENEFITS

Since the handover, Clade have kept the business as usual working as well as completing two more major enhancement projects – a Stock Replenishment Forecasting module and an automated Invoice Batch Checker.

"As with any other supplier, our aim is to replenish stock before it runs out," says Jacoby. "This can be quite complex because our business is very seasonal and, within that, retail sales are also affected by changes in the weather and other factors. Clade have a very good understanding of forecasting and worked with us to improve our efficiency."

The Fulfilment Checker streamlined the process of entering invoices into the accounting system.

"This used to be a very time-consuming manual task for a dedicated member of our accounts team to do every day," says Jacoby. "Now it's fully automated, so that was a very big achievement for Clade."

## A ROADMAP FOR ONGOING STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENTS

Clade has also quickly identified several more wide-ranging and strategic improvements.

"This was a big benefit we weren't expecting," says Jacoby. "For example, they have already moved some tasks to a web-based platform and will help us move more over time. This will make it much easier to roll out changes and make improvements."

Jacoby is confident that the benefits will continue over coming years.

"There's always some uncertainty when you start working with new people, but Clade have been very quick to listen and comply with our requests," he says. "Nothing seems to be too hard for them and we're really looking forward to working with them well into the future."



## ABOUT CLADE

Clade is a leading Microsoft consultancy – and we pride ourselves on getting the best results for our clients by doing things in a different way.

We get to know your business – not just where it is now but how far it can go in the future. We develop apps to help you reach your true potential by delivering exceptional customer experiences. We search out simple solutions to the most complex challenges and, as a trusted Microsoft partner, we have the most powerful tools at our disposal. We then roll up our sleeves and get on with the job till it's done.

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