

STUDENT HOUSING AUSTRALIA

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Mark McDonald, CEO – Officer in Effective Control

THE CLIENT

SHA specialises in purpose-built student accommodation. With a portfolio of more than 2,700 apartments, it offers affordable, safe housing in close proximity to universities and colleges around Melbourne. Because of its experience and size, SHA has also become an important contributor to the experience of international students studying at Australian universities. The business’s extensive overseas and local networks allow it to deliver services that ensure a successful outcome for students, developers and landlords throughout Australia.



THE CHALLENGE

SHA manages more than 2,700 fully furnished apartments; as such it is responsible for payments of quarterly council, water and strata levy rates, on top of general creditor invoices.

Invoices were received at head office, then sent out to the two other offices for approval in thrice-weekly internal-mail runs. Property managers approved the invoices, which were then returned in the next internal-mail run, with the data then entered by a barcode into Console. Invoices were filed by building and apartment.

In preparation for the weekly statement run, all paid invoices were unfiled and attached to statements, then run through a folding and envelope-stuffing machine, ready for franking and dropping off at the post office.

SHA’s sister company, an owners’ corporation business, uses electronic document-management software that partially integrates into the owners’ corporation software. This gave SHA a clear insight into the benefits that a document-capture solution offered. However, management did not see sufficient benefit in SHA using the same software because the partial-only integration still meant some manual intervention was required, with insufficient labour savings as a result.

To ensure the process was totally streamlined, SHA wanted a solution that completely integrated with Console to eliminate manual data entry and intervention, and automate the entire process.

“We’re very big on automating processes and paying people to think rather than do data entry. Our trust account operators can now spend time on fixing things or dealing with enquiries, rather than saying “I can’t do that, I have to get all of this data entry done for statement runs.”

THE SOLUTION

SHA chose Viatek ScanAssist for its total integration with Console and ease of use. The document-capture solution is installed at head office; however, documents are scanned from the two site offices to head office.

THE RESULT

The solution has impacted on SHA's bottom line, by allowing the business to better utilise man-hours and staff skills, and drop a weekly internal-mail run.

The new process still sees all invoices coming into the head office and sent out to the two other offices for approval, but only in twice-weekly internal mail runs. Property managers approve invoices, then scan them directly to the trust account operators, eliminating the need to wait for paperwork to be sent back manually. The lack of time lag, plus no need for data entry, saves one to two days in turn around time per week.

Operators enter documents by simply dragging them into the correct creditor folder on Viatek ScanAssist, after which the software takes over. Entered invoices do not need to be filed; neither do paid invoices need to be un-filed to be attached to statements.

In statement runs now, all invoices are attached to statements and SHA emails out all relevant documents simultaneously. This has eliminated the need to print, fold, stuff and frank envelopes, then take them to the post office, resulting in a man-hour saving of 1.5 days a week for each trust account operator. With two trust account operators, this saves three days a week, equating to \$3,000 a month. Additionally, the business is saving another 1.5 hours a week by reducing the weekly internal-mail run from three to two, equating to \$300 a month, giving a total saving of \$3,300 a month.



This has completely freed up staff time, allowing SHA to redeploy those staff to better utilise their skills to advance the business.

Mark McDonald, SHA's CEO, says, "We were already barcoding documents to recover costs - to the point we actually made our own internal ones to enter data - because a barcode is just a new font. But where we were manually entering invoices for \$2.80 for registered post for example, it cost more in labour to do than in actually recovering the \$2.80. So that's the next thing we'll be doing with ScanAssist: to convert all of the invoices we internally generate so they can automatically be logged on to the system as well."

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THE NEAR FUTURE

Mark says, "Because we have such a large rent roll, last year we had just under 2,000 new tenants for the year. When we get back the residential tenancy bond-lodgement form, that registration number must be entered for each tenant. Viatek is working on a form for us so we can scan those 2,000 lodgement forms into the system, and the data will be entered into the bond-lodgement area of Console.

"On top of that, Viatek is working on a system for direct debiting from tenants' bank accounts. Once Viatek has done this, we can do that receipting the way we want, which will be a significant saving as well. Then I'll be a very happy camper!

"The other thing we'll be doing is in response to the banking code which changes next year, so when money is transferred, funds will clear in six minutes rather than the current three or four days. So we are moving towards a daily statement run as well, and that will benefit both our clients and us. Money will hit our account, and we'll data enter it, if nothing comes back within half an hour, then we'll be able to do the statement run daily.



“There are lots of efficiencies, but the other thing is that the Viatek team is very happy to hear you out. Because we have such a large rent roll, I’m used to pushing the envelope on processes. I could see the benefits in ScanAssist, but I wanted these other two new facilities as well, and Viatek were more than happy to have the discussion and create the solution. They’ve been very responsive, including in setting up the templates, and the results have been fantastic to-date. We’re very impressed. The combination of Console Gateway Live teamed with Viatek ScanAssist has made huge improvements to the way our business operates.”

“SHA’s total man-hour savings due to Viatek ScanAssist are around \$30,000 a year - and this already takes into account the software’s cost. For us, this was not about reducing labour, but better using it, and ScanAssist has meant we can redeploy people to do other things and build other areas of the business.”



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“I’ve been very, very impressed with the software, it’s extraordinarily powerful software, and has completely reduced all that boring, mundane stuff.”

Mark McDonald, CEO – Officer in Effective Control

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