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## CUSTOMER STORY – RETAIL & LOGISTICS

# Massdiscounters

SQS and Business Connexion deliver powerful new debtors system

### Background

Based in South Africa, the Massmart Group comprises nine wholesale and retail chains – Game, DionWired, Makro, Builders Warehouse, Builders Express, Builders Trade Depot, CBW, Jumbo Cash and Carry – and the Shield buying group. With a total of 290 stores in 14 countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Massmart employs over 28,000 permanent and flexi-time staff, and achieved annual sales of R 43.1 billion for the year ending 30 June 2009.

The Group's Massdiscounters operating division operates the Game and Dion Wired retail formats, selling a wide range of general merchandise, electrical appliances and non-perishable groceries in a total of 93 stores.

### Challenge

The company's existing hosted debtors system had been sold to a third party, and support for non-interest-bearing accounts was set to be phased out. This effectively meant that Massdiscounters would lose the ability to manage collections, laybys, extended warranties and corporate accounts. To avoid business disruption and contractual penalties, Massdiscounters needed to meet a precise deadline for cutting over to its own solution for managing non-interest-bearing accounts.

The company considered a packaged solution from SAP, but decided that developing a custom solution would provide a better fit with its Point of Sales (POS) terminals. The intention was to minimise the need for change management in the business, in part by ensuring that staff would not require extensive training on the new solution. The challenges for the development team were significant: not only was there a tight deadline and a need to integrate with legacy mainframe systems, but with operations spanning Africa, Massdiscounters required a multi-currency, multi-jurisdiction solution.

## Solution

For the new debtors system, Massdiscounters chose to work with Business Connexion (BCX), a provider of innovative business solutions based on information and communications technology. BCX partnered with SQS to handle all aspects of testing for the new solution. Kobus de Ru, Store Operations Manager at Massdiscounters, comments: „We have a strong, long-term relationship with BCX – they understand our business and they were already familiar with our POS and back-end systems.“

BCX worked with Massdiscounters to review the business specification and define the functional specification for the new debtors system. The financial importance of non-interest-bearing accounts to Massdiscounters made it vital to ensure the on-time delivery of a perfectly functional application. As Kobus de Ru puts it, „There really was no alternative to delivering a working solution on time, which made the project a significant challenge on both sides“. The BCX project management and development team employed an Agile Scrum methodology, aligned with the traditional SDLC (Solution Development Life Cycle). BCX worked in partnership with SQS, delivering the project through the „Joint Testing Centre“ (JTEC), an independent testing initiative established by the two organisations. JTEC’s conformance to recognised testing and project methodologies guaranteed that strong control was maintained over the project, ensuring no surprises and that all elements of the solution were thoroughly tested.

Etsi Heuer, former Regional Programme Manager at BCX, says, „The SQS team were excellent in understanding and even anticipating our requirements. The mainframe application environment at Massdiscounters is very specialised and complex, but they were up to the challenge. We built up a strong working relationship with SQS, and were impressed by the depth and extent of the testing they carried out, which went well beyond the functional specification.“ SQS delivered a highly automated test environment that helped the project team:

- provide an independent view of the quality of the software being delivered
- avoid potential stumbling blocks that had the potential to delay the move into production
- mitigate risk and reduce the amount of re-work required in coding
- achieve consistent on-time delivery of each solution milestone
- ensure full regression testing was carried out
- deliver the complete project on time
- ultimately deliver a solution that precisely met the business requirements.

## Benefits for the Customer

The new debtors solution, which was delivered on time and within budget, is integrated with POM (the Massdiscounters mainframe system which holds master data on pricing) and provides a familiar look-and-feel for staff. The immediate benefit of the solution was business continuity: very simply, it enabled Massdiscounters to maintain its non-interest-bearing debtors services. If the combined BCX-SQS team had failed to meet the deadline, Massdiscounters would potentially have experienced business disruption and incurred significant financial penalties.

Kobus de Ru comments: „The new debtors solution is also much more flexible, enabling managers in head office to create or change noninterest-bearing accounts without needing to submit a change request to the developers. For example, if they want to support a new coupon promotion, they can set it up quickly and easily, which provides more speed and flexibility to the business.“

He adds, „BCX played a crucial role in keeping the solution architects in sync with the business. We always had a clear understanding of the status of the project, which helped keep our confidence levels high. In particular, BCX ensured consistency and discipline in all areas – and kept everything focused on our requirements as the customer. The pressure was on them to deliver a tricky project – and they did!“

Says Etsi Heuer, „A major success factor for the debtors project at Massdiscounters was the close teamwork between the BCX and SQS teams. We collaborated on a whole-lifecycle process, with clear controls to make sure nothing fell through the cracks. The technical skills and professionalism of the SQS team made them the ideal testing partners for BCX, and we continue to work in partnership with them on other major projects.“

### Contact

If you are interested in SQS’ service offering regarding testing and quality management for the Retail & Logistics industry, please do not hesitate to send us an e-mail: [info@sqs.com](mailto:info@sqs.com)