



“It’s liberating... and we haven’t even scratched the surface of what we can do”

The Party Hut

Solution: Sybiz Vision and Sybiz Visipay

Business Partner: Commercial Plus

2020 has provided unique and unexpected challenges for every Australian business. But seeing opportunity in difficult times, The Party Hut owner-operators Paul and Jane Mason have used the moment to reshape their operations in order to better meet the challenges of the future. Not only have Sybiz and Authorised Business Partner Commercial Plus delivered a powerful ERP solution, Paul and Jane have discovered a support network ready to help them manage the complexities of the COVID era.

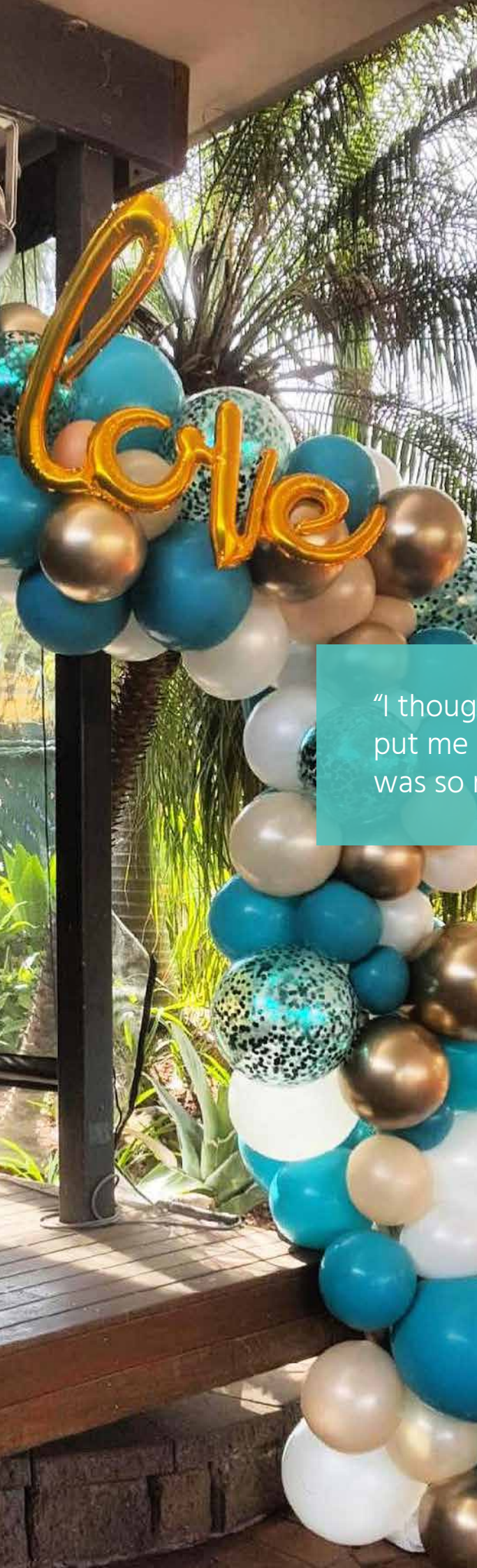
With the Masons at the helm, The Party Hut has expanded from a local supplier of party goods to a national one-stop-shop for costume sales and hire, balloons, confectionary machine rentals, jukebox and karaoke hire - even personalised cake decorating.

While the brick and mortar store remains the foundation of their success, the rise in online sales tipped off the team it was time for a shake-up.

“We’ve been noticing over the last 5 years the online sales here are growing and we couldn’t ignore it - it has been part of our plan to tap into it. With coronavirus, Jane decided ‘We’ve got time. Let’s do it,’” Paul told us.

“The web is the future for us, as well as retail, and that’s the real reason why we’ve upgraded.”

Sybiz’s Classic solution had been a critical part of The Party Hut’s success in the past, but to achieve their aspirations of a greater eCommerce presence, the Masons needed a modern, versatile ERP solution that could see their operations continue to grow well into the future.



Planning for success

The Party Hut was able to turn to the expertise of their Sybiz Authorised Business Partner, Commercial Plus, to help realise their plans to move to a new eCommerce platform and harness the power of the latest Sybiz Vision.

"We're moving away from [the old website] to a Shopify website. Sybiz Vision has been really good with that because we need a higher level of functionality. So the whole thing, the website, the [Classic] end of life, forced our hand and I'm glad it did."

ERP implementations can seem daunting for small-medium businesses. As Paul and Jane discovered, a successful ERP implementation is one that is supported with planning, guidance and communication from their Authorised Business Partner.

"I thought that was an amazing transition. It put me in a good frame of mind because it was so robust."

"Commercial Plus have been amazing. David came in and gave us a couple of sessions early on just to get us used to the look. We have been using Sybiz Visipay and we knew it would be a bit similar to that... We just tested it for a few weeks; How do you do this, how do you do that?"

"By the time we went live, David said it'll take a couple of days [to adjust]. He left by lunchtime on the first day because there was nothing to do!"

"The implementation part of it was a positive. David is a really smart guy, he... took our data and transformed it into Sybiz Vision's format. Everything he did was pretty much perfect, you couldn't fault it."

"We've had great support, Gemma and David have been amazing. We've had a lot of Team Viewer sessions and we push our boundaries to work out what Sybiz Vision can do."

A revolutionary shake-up

Of course, even though Paul and Jane were aware of Sybiz Vision's capabilities, seeing the difference in their everyday operations was a revolutionary experience.

Inventory management is a primary focus for Paul, who needed greater flexibility to manipulate and transform information throughout his day.

"It has turbocharged what we used to have."

"Our inventory is what we need to manage - it's our asset. [Sybiz Vision] gives me more power to do that, especially massaging it for the website."

"The custom fields we used in the old Classic software were exactly the same but it wasn't as flexible. In the old system we had to log everyone out to create a field or edit a field. This one you can just do it on the fly."

The grid-based layout of Sybiz Vision has delivered an ease of use that has vastly improved how Paul manages inventory, making information easier to identify and manipulate.

"I just couldn't do without the product grids. I spend all day in the inventory product grids that they've created for us, which bring in all my custom fields. With your grids, how you can customise them - it can continuously change to suit your day or to suit the products you're looking at."

Efficiencies help any business thrive and, with Sybiz Vision, the Masons have been able to cut down on tedious manual processes to improve

speed and accuracy. For example, new inventory products can now be entered with a single price, and Sybiz Vision takes care of the rest.

"There's 5 different tiers of pricing, like retail, wholesale, quantity buy; I just put in one sell price now and [Commercial Plus] have written a program that just makes it happen automatically and that just saves me time and effort."

"We found the import/export function and the searching capacity is amazing compared to what we've come from. We've got probably 10 staff with us here and they've got used to it pretty quickly as well. It's not too difficult to learn."

Paul especially wanted to stress how revolutionary the change has been for efficiency and user experience.

"You can have this quote: Paul Mason from The Party Hut loves the search function."

"I can get so much information so much quicker. It was available [in the old system] and you could get it but it was a bit clunky. Where this one is just like... once you wrap your mind around how you've done it and the way you've gone about it, it's good, it's quick and it's powerful."

Inventory management can become incredibly complex for a party goods supplier, with sometimes countless combinations of products sizes, colours and styles. Tracking all of these data points is essential, but management and reporting still needs to remain efficient and streamlined.

Thanks to their knowledge of Sybiz Vision and expertise in refining business processes, Commercial Plus were able to devise a reporting solution that delivered an incredible outcome for the Masons.

"David has given us some custom reporting mechanisms. We need a lot of labels for products and also reordering of stock, and he's been able to pick bits of the system, put it together in a format that just seems time efficient," Jane says.

"We say, 'This is what we'd like to do, this is what information we need,' and he's been able to go into the system and massage it into a particular thing that suits us."

A seamless business ecosystem

Especially as customers increasingly turn to online shopping, Paul said the future of The Party Hut relied on a robust online presence.

"I think the single most important thing we can do for our survival is have a really good website. And I can see that all the data I can get out of Sybiz Vision... answers all the questions."

Connecting with a variety of third-party solutions allows businesses like The Party Hut to continue using trusted, industry-specific solutions, while still gaining the unique advantages of Sybiz's modern ERP solution. The Party Hut's new website is based on the Shopify eCommerce platform, just one of many with which Sybiz Vision can be seamlessly integrated.

"It's been a good match, Sybiz Vision and Shopify. We're about halfway through the website [development] now and we've had a few little issues but the flexibility in Sybiz Vision to get around that and to match those two systems has been very good," Jane told us.

And now, as Paul interacts with product information within Sybiz Vision, he can easily transfer data directly to the Shopify front-end.

"We tag the products in Sybiz Vision's import/export wizard really quickly," Paul says.

"So we can grab 500, 1000 items, specifically tag them in Excel and then import them back in and Shopify automatically sucks up the [data] with their tags and does the magic. It's hard to imagine how we could do without it."

"It's not something you'd want to do on an individual basis," Jane stresses.

"I would think that all the other small to medium businesses out there going in that direction, [Sybiz Vision] is a good product for that."





The challenges of COVID-19

For a party goods supplier, COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings had a chilling effect on the future of The Party Hut. As Paul recounted,

"It was quite stressful. They shut parties down, and we're sort of hanging here thinking 'Where the hell are we going with this whole thing?'"

When the Australian Government announced JobKeeper as a lifeline for those struggling through COVID-19 restrictions, business owners were inundated with a torrent of information that was not only critical to get right, but also changing on a near daily basis.

"Sybiz gave really good information, presentations, webinars, and I just really felt like you were part of our team."

To help explain JobKeeper in a simple, direct way, Sybiz conducted several webinars and published comprehensive guides for managing JobKeeper from start to finish. Paul says these resources became a constant touchstone as they navigated JobKeeper.

"We're sitting there at home on our iPads watching the videos and replaying the videos to check we've got it all right. We're all putting it together the best we could. It was just a really good team effort."

Jane was equally grateful she was able to provide a strong safety net for her staff with the guidance of Sybiz,

"It was very well thought out. I just think great service for a difficult time. Wages and things, you don't want to make mistakes with. We've got friends with businesses using other packages and they haven't had the same sort of support with JobKeeper and the complexity of it and they've felt a bit isolated. So I think that's something that Sybiz has handled really well."

Forging a path to the future

Through a difficult time, The Party Hut has been able to secure a powerful ERP solution and a future-focused eCommerce platform. Paul and Jane have discovered smarter, more efficient management of their day to day operations with the new Sybiz Vision. And thanks to the intimate knowledge provided by Commerical Plus, their Sybiz Authorised Business Partner, the whole team have been able to unlock even greater capability across their entire business management suite.

But even with so much already available to them, Paul and Jane say they're only just getting started.

"This has just given us total freedom to massage our data and I just really enjoy it. I just think it's wonderful. It's liberating... and we haven't even scratched the surface of what we can do."

