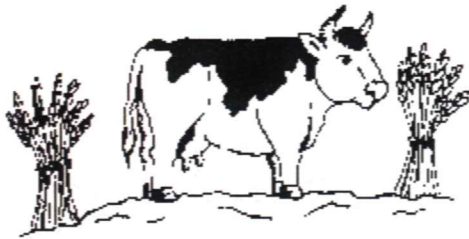


Case Study



John Holt

C.E. Holt and Partners
Droke and Manor Farms

KEY Accounts User



The Holt family have been farming at East Dean for 70 years.

I am the third generation tenant farmer on Droke and Manor Farms and my wife, Janet, and I still farm the 900 acres in partnership so in one sense nothing much has changed. However, I doubt if my grandfather would recognise the business or our management recording systems.

Eight years ago we were looking to diversify the business and we started by looking at how to increase the income from milk – should we add value by retailing it? We decided that this was a risky option, and it was a chance visit to an All Terrain Boarding (ATB) stand at the Royal Show that started us off in the provision of ATB or mountain boarding. It is the youngest and fastest growing extreme sport in the UK and is certainly an unusual sight on the Downs in West Sussex.

The boys from the stand came down with a dozen boards one Saturday. We did a bit of local advertising and 50 people turned up to have a go! We bought a few boards to hire out each Saturday on the strength of that day's success and the enterprise has steadily grown from 28 days during the summer for the first two years to a new level this year of 150 days from March through to October.

Haredown ATB is now a well recognised mountain boarding centre having already hosted 3 national competitions. We have an equipment shop, on-site catering and some incredible natural and man made features, including two border-cross courses and freestyle jumps.



I had KEY Accounts in place before I started the ATB. I like to keep farm recording simple and the inputting and reports are allocated to 4 cost centres only, namely the 600 acres of combinable crops, a 125 cow dairy herd, store beef and the ATB. It is a no frills system operated by Sarah, the farm secretary and me; she does the inputting and cheque issuing on two days per month. In the eighties we struggled with a DOS system on an Apple computer and in hindsight I would not have bothered. It was too complicated and time consuming.

The software that we use is KEY Accounts, Farmade MultiCrop and NMR's impelPRO.

I used to struggle with the stock control on the old system but now I do the general spray, fertiliser and chemical management on KEY and the detail in MultiCrop – it works well.

Case Study



It is essential with a new venture using casual labour and taking cash and credit cards that you keep right on top of the figures. The ATB can look good on paper until you take off VAT!

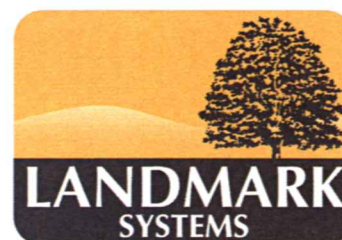
What I like about KEY Accounts is the accurate cost allocation it allows me to make. I know that the information is there and how my enterprises are performing, at the end of the season I can get the necessary reports in an understandable format. Splitting the labour into full time and casual and calculating VAT is complicated but the system makes it easy.



We use Landmark's support line occasionally, the updates arrive regularly and we always have a year-end visit to tidy up any loose ends.

Haredown ATB has taken off with website bookings adding to the success (www.haredown.com) and a full time manager in place during the season. Having been involved in every aspect from catering, through to bookings, sales and instructing I now want to step back a little bit.

My advice to anyone with a good idea for diversifying is to check out your market first. We did this by starting small with minimal investment to test the waters and have since developed the business steadily as our confidence and reputation has grown. Also a good recording and accounts software system that allows you to simply and accurately cost your new enterprise is essential.



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