



Aculab is a leading provider of enabling technology for the communications market. Products include the Prosody (TM) speech processing platform, running world-class multi-channel speech recognition and synthesis algorithms. Aculab's Head Office is in Milton Keynes, and the company has branches in the U.S.A, Germany, Australia together with a sales contact in the Netherlands.

A successful and fast-growing company, Aculab has tripled its Head Office staff in the last few years, with a corresponding increase in assets and equipment. Asset management procedures had struggled to keep pace with the growth of the company, and Aculab was aware that the information on its asset register was likely to be incomplete and inaccurate.

AssetWare Technology were asked to carry out a review of Aculab's asset management procedures and advise on appropriate action. AssetWare's initial review found discrepancies between the information on the existing register and the assets physically present in the company. It also found inconsistencies in the naming of items, for example similar assets having different names which in turn created confusion when reconciling. There was also no easy way of classifying and grouping assets for reporting, or of assigning costs to the appropriate cost centre.

AssetWare's recommendation was for a complete physical audit of assets and reconciliation with the existing fixed assets register, resulting in the setting up of a detailed, up-to-date and accurate asset register. Assets would be barcoded, so future audits would be a simple matter of 'walk round and scan' using AssetWare's laser scanning and handheld computer technology.

Aware of the major commitment of time and resources that would be required for this task, Aculab decided to outsource to AssetWare's Technology's Audit team. Comments Finance Manager Lyn Robinson, "It would have been very time consuming to do the audit ourselves. It made much more sense to outsource it, and it was clear to us that AssetWare have a lot of experience in this field."

AssetWare's Audit consultants worked with Aculab's project team to draw up an up-to-date site plan and mark up departments, room numbers and cost centre areas. AssetWare's expert scheduling team then went through the office, R&D and manufacturing units at Aculab's Head Office, locating, identifying, recording and barcoding assets. The process took place over a two to three week period and, according to Robinson, caused virtually no disruption in Aculab's day-to-day activities.

As expected, the asset audit identified discrepancies between the information on the fixed assets register and the assets physically found in the

company. One problem that was encountered were assets recorded as bulk entries, such as the purchase of a number of computers which appeared in the asset register as a single asset.

The results of the audit were recorded in a spreadsheet and reconciled with the information on the old register. The reconciliation was largely a manual process. The reconciliation process took 10 man days in total, and resulted in about 90% of items being verified and reconciled.

"We are pleased with the high percentage of assets that have been reconciled by Assetware." says Robinson. "The next step for us will be to integrate these results with our applications software to ensure that our asset register is accurate and complete. We feel happier that we will now be able to provide a more detailed breakdown of information about our assets, for example, items such as PC Towers and screens have been individually barcoded. We have also made good use of the user-defined fields which AssetWare's system allows, so we can associate assets with people, departments and cost centres. Overall, the new system will allow us to maintain a much tighter physical and financial control over our assets."

Aculab are planning to do regular asset audits to ensure that the information on the asset register is kept up-to-date. "Now that we have the barcoding system, we anticipate that this will be a fast and straightforward job which will be handled by our Facilities Manager," says Robinson.

Aculab looks set to maintain its growth and has several advanced new products under development. AssetWare Technology's products and services will play a key role in the continuing success of the company.