About Flowlens

Established in 2006, Flowlens is an innovative cloud-based material requirements planning (MRP) software for small and medium enterprise equipment manufacturers and dealers. Flowlens customers work smarter with user-friendly, joined-up sales, stock management, MRP, production and dispatch tools that reduce lead times and improve profitability.

flowlens.com

Using the Cloud to Help Manufacturers Build Better Businesses

In the early days of Flowlens, founder Rich Dale and his lead architect, Stuart Gibson, built virtually anything their customers brought to them. Launched in 2006 as a custom software company serving manufacturers of all sizes in Northern Ireland, the company now provides cloud CRM (customer relationship management) and MRP (materials requirement planning) software to companies throughout Ireland and the United Kingdom.

“Whenever I see people wasting time, I want to find ways to prevent them from doing things in a convoluted and time-consuming manner,” said Rich. “Most projects during my career have been about optimizing processes and using the web to do that.”

“You name it, and we’ll build it,” was Rich and Stuart’s mantra in the early days. In the process of serving their customers, they witnessed how small manufacturers were suffering as they tried to cobble together bespoke and off-the-shelf software solutions to run their manufacturing operations.

“Small- to medium-sized manufacturers are typically very stretched in terms of resources, and that means their business processes are commonly just ad hoc or limited—maybe an accounting package or a CRM, but usually just a lot of spreadsheets—with an unhealthy reliance on information that exists only in people’s heads,” describes Rich.

Linode’s pricing is so reasonable that we can offer each client their dedicated servers with backup, which ensures them the best possible performance and workload segregation.

Stuart Gibson
Lead Architect, Flowlens
Rich and Stuart saw the inefficiency and waste plaguing these organizations and knew they could solve the problem. So they rebranded the company, converted from a services-based to a product-based organization, and built Flowlens to provide an all-in-one, modular software solution for small equipment manufacturers. The company's specialty is serving high-value, low-volume manufacturers of electrical equipment, farm machinery, built-to-fit all-terrain wheelchairs, industrial equipment, and a wide variety of other customized products.

“Typically, whenever these manufacturers make a sale, they first need to figure out if they have the inventory—the stock components and parts—that they need to make the products that have been ordered,” explained Rich. “Discovering at the last minute that you’re missing components you need to complete an order means that you’re tying up a lot of cash. You could have a 100,000-pound machine sitting there, waiting for final assembly, and you can’t get paid for it because you’ve got a 10-cent part that’s missing. We’re ‘joining up’ their sales and inventory systems.”

But that’s not all. With Flowlens MRP software, small manufacturers can plan work orders and forecast stock requirements and purchases. It also controls cash outlays and keeps track of all pre- and post-sales customer interactions, services, and product history.

“Some companies never gave much thought to how valuable this information could be until we made it easily accessible, manageable, and actionable,” said Rich. Flowlens gives small manufacturers a single source of truth about their entire business process and helps them increase sales, improve teamwork, save days of time and effort, and provide clear visibility to vital business data all in one place.

Linode’s performance quality and responsiveness allow us to provide our customers with a better product and complete confidence.

Rich Dale
Founder & CEO, Flowlens
Predictable Price-Performance

Rich credits Stuart with being the mastermind behind the architecture of the product. “He is Flowlens, inside and out,” says Rich. Stuart also manages Flowlens’ infrastructure platform, which has been on Linode since 2016.

“I had used Linode personally for six years and found it to be fantastic in terms of performance, cost, and service, so when we went looking for those benefits for Flowlens, I knew Linode was our answer,” recalls Stuart. “Most of our clients are UK- or Ireland-based, and many deal with data sovereignty requirements, so we use Linode’s London data center to run our servers and backup services.”

Since moving from Heroku to Linode, Flowlens has seen an improvement in day-to-day performance in terms of responsiveness to clients’ data queries, improving the product for everyone. “Linode’s pricing is so reasonable that we can offer each client their dedicated servers with backup, which ensures them the best possible performance and workload segregation,” said Stuart.

Rich added, “Linode’s performance quality and responsiveness allow us to provide our customers with a better product and complete confidence. When a small business owner asks us, ‘What are you doing to protect my precious information,’ we can refer them straight to Linode and the information on their website. They can find outstanding documentation and credentials that put their minds at ease.”

Another big part of the decision to switch to Linode was the ability to automate the Flowlens deployment process. “We have Ansible scripts running so that we can start up a new client now. What used to take someone two days of dedicated time can now be fired up in 10 to 15 minutes,” said Stuart.

When you combine Linode’s simplicity and speed with the best price-performance cloud computing and 24/7/365 customer support that has no tiers or hand-offs, it’s easy to see why the relationship between Flowlens and Linode is flourishing.

“It’s easy to figure out what services I need and how much they cost, and it’s incredibly easy to scale up very affordably,” said Stuart. “If I need a service, I know I won’t get lost in the churn that you can experience with some of the hyperscale providers. Linode has always been very quick to solve any problems we may have. Working with Linode has been brilliant. They hit every mark in terms of cost, efficiency, and support. It’s exemplary.”
Our mission is to accelerate innovation by making cloud computing simple, affordable, and accessible to all.

Linode accelerates innovation by making cloud computing simple, accessible, and affordable to all. Founded in 2003, Linode helped pioneer the cloud computing industry and is today the largest independent open cloud provider in the world. Headquartered in Philadelphia’s Old City, the company empowers over 800,000 developers, startups, and businesses across its global network of 11 data centers.