

Ingredients for international success

Fast, reliable service, world class manufacturing processes and extensive quality control has led major national and international food companies to entrust Witwood Food Products with critical product development and the ongoing supply of ingredients for their internationally branded food offerings.

Background

Founded in 1982, Witwood is a multinational company manufacturing innovative batter mixes, breadcrumbs, seasonings, pre-dusts and dry mix marinades to the frozen and chilled food markets of Europe, Australasia and North America. Witwood has become the market leader in its field, responding to changes in the food industry, which have placed increased pressure upon suppliers to get products right, quickly. Their commitment to remain at the forefront of technological innovation has led to a significant investment in IT.

Establishing quality, service and innovation

By 1999 the company's UK-based R&D facility (Europe's largest independent ingredients factory) had outgrown its small-scale ERP system. A replacement was required that would support Witwood's move towards more complex manufacturing processes. This move was necessary in order for Witwood to continue to deliver unrivalled customer service backed by the highest levels of technical excellence and be able to rapidly introduce around 100-150 new product concepts every month.

According to Witwood's Managing Director, Bryan Day: "To achieve these goals, we needed a manufacturing-focussed system that would integrate the individual areas of our business and provide flexible, speedy management reporting. Formul8 from Sanderson was ideal because of its specialist food capabilities, which meant we didn't inherit the usual complexities associated with more generalised ERP systems."

Through Formul8's modular design any or all food distribution and manufacturing processes can be automated, from sales order processing, production, purchasing, warehousing, quality control, MRP/ CRP and costing to accounting. A key consideration was the necessity to have two-way traceability through to customers and suppliers. A flexible architecture allowed Witwood to develop the basic system to support its R&D operations.

With increasing reliance on their IT infrastructure and ERP software, Witwood needed to know that they had a reliable system, capable of 'round the clock', 24/7 operation if necessary. As an IBM Business Partner, Sanderson was able to supply the high availability required with IBM's pSeries servers. Coupled with the Sanderson System Resilience Software Module this ensures minimum downtime in the event of a serious fault or a disaster.

Standard 24-hour response to sample requests

Using Formul8's New Product Development (NPD) Module, Witwood now responds to sample requests within 24 hours. Each time a new coating, taste or product is developed, the recipe is entered directly onto the system that holds 20,000+ recipes, enabling flavours to be accurately reproduced at speed. Witwood has also installed a VPN to facilitate the free exchange of information between its global R&D teams, maximising product development efforts to meet local needs.

Solution Summary



Customer Profile

- Multinational food ingredient developer & manufacturer

Challenge

- Integrate business processes to support complex manufacturing
- Maintain unrivalled customer service and highest levels of technical excellence
- Introduce 100-150 innovative new product concepts per month

Solution

- Enable R&D, production & warehouse processes to operate in real-time using Formul8

Benefits

- Just-in-time manufacturing profitably applied to finished products
- Quality is controlled at all stages of production through to delivery
- Standard 24-hour response to sample requests
- Free, secure exchange of information between overseas sites

All batch ingredients can be quickly traced back to their original source through the allocation of unique coding, allowing Witwood to meet numerous international quality assurance specifications and HACCP procedures within minutes rather than trawling through paperwork which could involve many man days.

Automated warehousing using Radio Data Terminals

Storing available stock quantities on the system, combined with the use of handheld and forklift truck-mounted Radio Data Terminals (RDTs) which link into Formul8, enable raw materials to be immediately located within the warehouse and made available to the production line. Using RDTs to automate further warehouse processes means quality is controlled right up to the customer's door – in fact since automating dispatch not one credit note has been issued for incorrect documentation, products or quantities!

Bryan Day says: "Installing the Sanderson Warehousing Module was the smoothest implementation I have seen in 25 years of using computerised systems. The inevitable teething problems were minor and dealt with immediately. Some warehouse operatives had concerns about using a sophisticated computerised system, but within an hour they had become relaxed with it. Additional data input is needed in some areas, but is far outweighed by time savings in others. Our previous procedures gave us good stock control but at the cost of considerable input and management time. The new system delivers near-perfect accuracy, with a huge reduction in effort. Previously, the warehouse was controlled from the office, now it is controlled from the floor in real-time. Our warehouse personnel have been truly empowered."

Profitable production of finished products

Just-in-time manufacturing of finished products is achieved using real-time management information that enables sales patterns to be closely tracked - how well each product is doing in terms of sales, the frequency of repeat-orders for these goods and so on. Based on this data, accurate long-term production planning and short-term scheduling can be made, from which Formul8's MRP (Materials Requirements Planning) facility will calculate the quantity of appropriate raw materials required and by what date.

Bryan Day explains: "Production planning used to be dependent on the experience and knowledge of individual managers. MRP has allowed us to build this knowledge into a "best practice" system that delivers consistent results every time. We have greater control over Finished Goods stock levels and decisions whether to make stocks of particular products are based on agreed parameters that are set up within the MRP system. This ensures that target customer service levels are achieved without carrying excessive stocks. Since MRP stock levels move in line with demand, we can be sure that the right product is always in stock at the right time.

"We've always provided good customer service, but MRP has enabled us to increase levels further. And, we are achieving this without last minute panics that could have a knock on effect on other customers. MRP is also giving a financial payback. Activity on planning production has reduced from 2 people working a 10-hour day to 1 person working 6 hours maximum. In having good control of stocks, we have minimised the working capital tied up in the business."

Further manual processes were recently removed from critical control points on the factory floor through the addition of SFDC (Shop Floor Data Capture) capability. This introduces real-time recording into production processes integrating Sartorius weigh scale equipment with Sanderson's SFDC Module for yet greater supply chain efficiency.



Formul8 enables Witwood to rapidly introduce 100-150 new product concepts per month



Two-way traceability through to customers and suppliers is provided by Formul8



Time spent on production planning has reduced from 20 hours to 6

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