

Avondale Foods

Enterprise Resource Planning - Enterprise

**Region**

Northern Ireland

Sector

Food Production

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In an industry with increasingly tight margins, rigorous regulations and demanding customers, Avondale Foods deployed Microsoft Dynamics AX to stay ahead. With improved processes and better visibility of the business, the company is able to maintain and build on its market leading position.

THE PROBLEM

Over 30 years Avondale Foods has grown to become one of the UK's leading manufacturers and suppliers to the biggest supermarket and retail brands across Britain and Ireland. Its bagged salads, side salads and vegetable accompaniments, along with a range of soups and sauces, are made in its state-of-the-art food production facility in Craigavon, Northern Ireland, where the company employs 365 people.

The company had developed its own business management system that was starting to show its age after many years of service. Paper-based processes that connected the office to the production line were ripe for improvement. There was no real mechanism for materials requirement planning, scheduling or management of the production process. While a paper-based traceability system was rigorous and worked fine there was recognition that an automated process might be less time consuming.

Another driver for change came when a leading customer upgraded their systems and expected its supply chain partners to follow suit and integrate with its new solution.

"It helps us to nail down costs – which by monitoring them consistently we can save money and stay competitive."

Greer Geddis, Avondale Foods

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THE SOLUTION

Replacing disparate systems with a single unified solution would facilitate enhanced visibility of the business and achieve greater competitive advantage. Implementing an ERP system is always a big challenge because it impacts on every aspect of a business. The challenge was compounded at Avondale because it was integrating Dynamics AX into handheld devices and touchscreens on the factory floor for an end-to-end solution that would improve overall productivity. The handhelds facilitate faster movement of products through the business while the touchscreens provide instant confirmation of when a job is finished.

"Dynamics AX extends business management to the factory floor with a lot of automation, using scanning and touchscreen technology to capture processes in real time. You end up with a truly integrated system," said Paul Bingham, Managing Director of Sysco Software Solutions.

An integrated AX EDI module was delivered which encompassed Avondale's specific requirements around sales forecasting, not just for existing supply chain customers but to help provision with new trading partners more quickly. Extensive training has been implemented as part of a culture change programme.

BENEFITS

Although it's still early days for Avondale, Microsoft Dynamics AX is already delivering benefits and the company is confident that it now has a system to take it into the future. Being able to see where cost savings and process improvements can be made, Avondale can run its business more efficiently. The business is better positioned to compete for new contracts, knowing that core cost information and margins are accurate and up to date.

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Dynamics AX enables Avondale to comply with the most stringent customer demands, from traceability and visibility of stock movements to accounts management and billing.

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Paul Bingham, Commercial Director, Sysco Software Solutions

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Analysing profit margin is another big gain, being able to dig down into specific customer recipes and manage the different ingredients on an individual level. Margins are tight and suppliers have to get their pricing right when costing for contracts. Better visibility of sales will improve the procurement process, identify trends and make more accurate sales forecasts.

"It's all about having a joined-up system where sales and demand are driving production and procurement."

Paul Bingham, Sysco Software Solutions

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