Success never tasted so good

Pronto Software delivers custom ERP solution to Chicago's top frozen pizza company.

When the winning run from a baseball game shattered the front window of their tavern, Mary and Vincent Grittani decided to name it the Home Run Inn. That was 1923. Today, what started as a small neighbourhood bar cooking up homemade pizza, is a market leader in the world's largest frozen pizza market - Chicago.

Home Run Inn makes and distributes 14 million frozen pizzas a year through a network of two food plants and one central distribution facility. It has over 1,400 customers from the greater Chicago area in Illinois, through the Milwaukee area in Wisconsin, including Jewel, Dominick's and Aldi supermarkets.

Growth through distribution

In 2002, Home Run Inn established a distribution arm in partnership with Power Play distributors, giving them total control of the entire supply chain.

According to IT Director, Kevin Costello, the partnership set the company up for significant expansion and business growth. "Home Run Inn and Power Play distributors established a direct store delivery system that, over the next five years, would enable us to more than double our market share from eight to 18 per cent," says Costello.

HOME RUN INN

- Chicago's top-selling frozen pizza brand
- Employs 175 staff across two manufacturing plants and one distribution facility
- Produces 14 million frozen pizzas each year
- Supplies Jewel supermarkets, Dominick's and Aldi

"This established Home Run Inn as the top-selling brand in the Chicago area, but it also exposed the limitations of our legacy IT system, which was not scalable for what our future needs were becoming," he says.

Home Run Inn had been using a legacy ERP system to manage production and accounting for a number of years, but according to Costello, it was not scalable and could not support the company's future growth.

They needed a mobile computing solution where employees could remotely enter a sales order and generate an invoice for the customer straight off the truck which fed directly into the accounting system.

Scalable solution

Home Run Inn launched their search for a new ERP software and quickly realised that there were very few off-the-shelf solutions that would meet their needs. "Our requirements were very specific and driven by the needs of the people who were delivering our products," says Costello.

"We needed a piece of software that was user friendly, cost effective and had all the functionality across many business functions in one package," he adds.

Three months after their initial meeting with the reseller, PRONTO-Xi, a fully integrated ERP solution was implemented at Home Run Inn.

Continuous enhancements

In addition to the financial, manufacturing, distribution, purchasing and sales features, Home Run Inn was provided with a wireless handheld module tailored to meet their point-of-sale requirements.

"In addition to providing a total ERP solution, we had designed for us our own hand-held sales order entry module to function off a Microsoft terminal server for one tenth of the cost of a new sales system," says Costello.

"Just four months after delivering their original solution, we were offered an upgrade to a more sophisticated handheld module with a barcode scanner capability. PRONTO-Xi has continued to evolve into a more sophisticated and powerful solution as time has gone by," he says.

Real-time benefits

According to Costello, the implementation of PRONTO-Xi has seen a significant reduction in data entry errors and far fewer instances in the duplication of work.

"The real-time data entry of PRONTO-Xi was ahead of its time. We were no longer finding discrepancies between customer orders and despatched goods," says Costello.

Using PRONTO-Xi, sales orders are fully integrated with inventory, accounts receivable, general ledger and customer relationship management functions. This means that when a sales order is updated, each related area is automatically updated.

KEY BENEFITS

- Cost effective, fully-integrated solution
- Inherent scalability to support business growth
- Real-time data generation improving accuracy and efficiency
- Lower IT maintenance costs
- Customised to meet specific business requirements

The reliability and inherent scalability of the system has also seen a reduction in the number of IT support hours, dramatically reducing maintenance costs.

"Unlike our legacy solution, PRONTO-Xi is stable. I no longer need several IT support calls to patch the database," says Costello.

Competitive edge

Costello believes PRONTO-Xi has played a significant part in the growth of Home Run Inn over the past five years, providing the business with the tools it needs to compete against larger companies like Kraft Foods and Schwan Foods.

"All of the critical pieces of functionality included in PRONTO-Xi gave us an IT backbone that instantaneously made our company competitive - and helped us double our market share," he says.

PRONTO-Xi has met every need we have had so far, which has underpinned our growth and made them an exceptional solution provider and business partner, now and in the future," he adds.

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