

Customer case studies

Cromer Crab

Seafood processor Cromer Crab sought a manufacturing solution to increase visibility of materials, packaging and stock. Access Supply Chain has facilitated analysis of material and packaging usage and labour efficiency yielding anticipated cost savings estimated at £800,000.

“We’ve now got true visibility of materials and packaging stocks, work in progress (WIP), the whole lot.”

Nigel Plant
Finance Controller



Difficult beginnings

Nigel describes the business issues back then as poor stock control, problems with manual production tracking and tracing, poor quality information due to fragmented data across the business and high admin costs even for providing basic management information. He also points to a lack of costing and margin information, no control over material wastage and no labour efficiency information, all of which made life difficult.

All that started to change, when the combination of a new management team and, coincidentally, some supplier rationalisation among key customers resulted in major contracts from Tesco and subsequently also Marks & Spencer, forcing dramatic change. Says Nigel, “We made the decision to purchase the Access SQL-based financials package, and after installing the IT

and network infrastructure went for the implementation.”

With that up and running and management information and controls sharpening up, Cromer Crab went looking for a manufacturing and supply chain system.

“We wanted several things from a new system, like real-time views of stocks, the ability to trace product movements, consistent data across the business, improved admin effectiveness, product costings and the ability to identify wastage and to measure labour costs by work centre,” says Nigel. “We not only needed to be able to reduce stock losses and wasted time, comply with retailers’ requirements and eliminate reconciliation problems, but also to be able to use the system to review our product portfolio and make production and supply chain improvements.”

Industry	Manufacturing
Geographic	Norfolk
Employees	101 - 250
Turnover	£27.5m
Solution	Access Supply Chain Dimensions
Modules	Core ledgers Sales order processing & invoicing Purchase order processing Works orders Stock control Location & lot control MRPII Job costing Time recording EDI

The company also needed a system that would integrate with the Dimensions financial software, and that could use its coding structures, was configurable, able to generate user-defined reports through Crystal and that was modular, so that it could take a phased and vanilla approach to the implementation.

“We chose Access Supply Chain for a number of reasons,” he says. “It was a proven manufacturing system with other food-based suppliers already up and running. It was clearly scalable, modular and flexible with wide-ranging functionality. It catered for our integration requirements since it comes from the same company. It was SQL-based with Microsoft applications integration, which was important for linking into our admin and management information requirements. It also provided for external report writing through Crystal. But most importantly, they worked hard to understand our business and they offered a strong 10-step structured implementation plan and were able to offer future enhancements like barcoding and forecasting tools, which were very much on our radar.”

As for the implementation, that had to start with full business process mapping. “We had to do that because we didn’t have an existing system, so we used their consultant to help us understand how we were working and how we could make useful changes.

“Then we set up the project team and they did five days on-site training, which was followed by setting up the pilot system with the product coding structures, nominal ledger and the rest. We also had to set up product costings and get into the detail of process improvements and our reporting requirements. In fact, most of the reports are now our own: the system has proved to be very flexible.”

With phase one of this implementation being stock control and purchase orders only, end user training wasn’t too big a deal, so the system went live on-time after final data migration and acceptance testing. “That took five months, and then over the next six months we went for phase two, with all the other core modules – sales order processing, electronic data interface (EDI), invoicing, production and traceability and lot control.” Nigel says hindsight provides valuable lessons. “Initially, I was over-ambitious: I wanted to do phases one and two together, but Access said we should split it up, and they were right. You need that structured approach with sensible timeframes. The other problem is resource: we had four project team members but they all had their own day jobs. We should have taken them off those so that we had the full resource all the time.” He also urges awareness of the problems of limited computer skills among staff.

“You can’t expect everyone in production to have the skills. Also, they’re not going to understand the importance of their data input to the business.

“So you need to be aware of the business culture and take a proactive approach to the likely impacts of the system. If you don’t do training early enough, for example, then you’re forever playing catch up.”

That said, Cromer Crab’s achievements have been outstanding. “We’ve now got true visibility of materials and packaging stocks, work in progress (WIP), the whole lot. The whole sales order process is now fully automated with an EDI to our customers, and the purchasing process is the same – from purchase order raising when goods come in to receipt against that and, if price and quantity match, then automatic processing.

Feeling the pinch

“We’ve also got accurate BoMs [bills of materials] for every product, and that’s allowed us to look at our portfolio to understand problem products. Can we re-engineer the packaging, raw materials, labour processes? What about the selling price? There have been useful outcomes, and we’ve also aligned new product costing with materials – pulling information in from Access to make it easier and more accurate.

“Then on the sales side, we now have accurate history so we’re forecasting better and that means purchasing and also planning better.

“We can now give suppliers three-month forecasts and talk about quality and delivery performance. So we’ve improved our relationship with suppliers and impacted the purchase price. Marks & Spencer is now our second biggest customer: we couldn’t do what they need without this system.”

Who we are

Access specialises in the provision of fully functional ERP solutions for medium and large companies. Our modular system will give you a fully connected platform that can be constantly tuned and expanded – now and as you grow. Whether you are a distribution, manufacturing, assembly or service company, we provide cost-effective functionality for every aspect of your organisation.

Our Access Supply Chain ERP solution incorporates both distribution and manufacturing packages. Select the manufacturing and you can incorporate any or all of the distribution modules and vice versa. Both packages include fully integrated financials and, to complete your solution, powerful productivity modules are also available.

Further information

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