

NEW IT SOLUTION OPENS DOORS FOR POUPART

Information technology is playing an ever-increasing role in the arena of fresh produce. This month, FPJ takes a look at successful deployment of the Microsoft Dynamics NAV system at leading fruit supplier Poupart, a new scheme to help improve transport scheduling, and implementation of a new system for staffing solutions at Waitrose

BASED IN Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, Poupart is one of the UK's largest suppliers of quality soft fruit, top fruit, stonefruit, citrus, cherries, grapes and a host of other products to multiple retailers and independents.

To improve control of management information and enable better decision-making based on accurate, up-to-date data, Poupart turned to Tectura to deploy Microsoft Dynamics® NAV.

Rapid advances in supply chain management technology meant Poupart's systems were under increasing strain. Operating disparate and siloed systems for finance and sales order processing, forecasting, stock planning, promotion planning and market share analysis compounded problems caused by forecasts arriving by email, fax or telephone. "Forecasts often arrived late – if at all – and with a number of people re-keying information, both time and accuracy became a concern," said Robin Dawson, finance director at Poupart. "In addition, some of our produce arrives via third-party packhouses and gaining visibility of that stock was impossible."

Poupart began researching solutions that could deliver reliable and accurate information for effective sales, stock control and promotional planning – the business processes key to Poupart's success. "We based our decision on key criteria, which included flexibility and scalability," said Matthew Butlin, IT manager and project manager at Poupart. The company's search included industry-specific suppliers as well as global players such as SAP, Oracle and Microsoft.

The solution that most comprehensively addressed Poupart's requirements was Microsoft Dynamics NAV, delivered by Tectura, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. "We looked at the financial status of all the vendors, the track record and expertise of the partners and, of course, how we felt about working with them," continued Butlin. "The Microsoft solution ensured strong integration with the

rest of our IT infrastructure and Tectura, with its excellent methodology, disciplined and thorough approach and industry expertise, was simply head and shoulders above the rest."

At the outset of the engagement, Tectura's consultants invested time to thoroughly analyse Poupart's business. "From day one, Tectura understood our business and its requirements extremely well," said Butlin. "The team's analysis documentation is exceptional and they have an impressively thorough and proactive approach. The communication between us was outstanding throughout the project."

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is at the heart of the solution, which also includes Microsoft BizTalk Server and Microsoft SQL Server, standardising business processes across the group. The company-wide project involved 80 users in finance, sales and marketing, category management, technical, operations and purchasing. In addition, Tectura installed Microsoft Commerce Gateway to automate the exchange of data with the supermarkets using EDI, and with the packhouses and growers, via a web-based XML application.

"The project was delivered on time and within budget," confirmed Butlin. "Tectura adopted a phased project approach and focused on resolving any problems as they arose, to cause as little disruption as possible. We see these as critical components of an implementation that was successful from the day we went live."

Since Poupart started working with Tectura, the business has continued to grow year on year, with annual turnover doubling in that time. Poupart executive chairman Laurence Olins could not be happier. "Our investment in Microsoft Dynamics NAV and our partnership with Tectura enabled us to exploit new opportunities, including acquisitions, which were never available to us before," he said. "We have expanded our business and we have enormous confidence that we have a platform for growth for at least 10 years." ○



TOMTOM OPTIMISED

TOMTOM WORK and British routing and scheduling solution provider DPS have combined forces to offer a fully integrated end-to-end scheduling and job dispatch solution.

This allows the scheduling and route planning to be optimised using the real-time information provided by TomTom WORK. In particular, estimated time of arrivals (ETAs) from the TomTom Navigation device are fed back to the DPS scheduling platform, allowing the system to react to changing conditions on the road in real time.

TomTom WORK is the business-to-business division of the world leader in portable navigation solutions, TomTom.

Created in 2006, TomTom WORK is already Europe's fastest-growing telematics solution provider and continues to provide innovative, easy-to-use and affordable vehicle tracking and navigation solutions.

DPS is the provider of the LogiX suite of leading routing and scheduling solutions. These include the desktop solution Route LogiX and the world-leading hosted solution logixcentral, which uses state-of-the-art 'Cloud Computing' Technology.

With TomTom WORK, fleet managers have the opportunity to track vehicles around the clock and profit from extensive reporting tools. This includes reports on mileage, vehicle idling, exception reports and detailed journey reports, as well as providing a simple tool to dispatch jobs directly to the TomTom navigation device.

Paul Palmer, ceo of DPS, said: "Our customers are already saving up to 25 per cent on their distribution costs by using LogiX software. Our relationship with

TomTom means that routes will be more efficient and customer service level significantly increased. If there is an unanticipated delay on a route, we will know in plenty of time to alert the customer."

He added: "There are also additional green benefits from this combined offering. More efficient routes mean fewer miles and a smaller carbon footprint."

The Financial and Carbon Savings (FACS) calculator is the first of its kind and can be downloaded at www.logixcentral.com/vehicle_scheduling_downloads.php.

"Because logixcentral is a pay-as-you-go model, it is available, and brings major benefits, to smaller fleets and has also introduced vehicle routing and scheduling to new sectors, in particular service industries," said Palmer.

TomTom WORK has also just released a Truck Navigation solution for the first time which will also benefit businesses using the DPS solution. This solution will provide route information that is optimised for goods vehicles and features relevant information such as clearance heights and weight restrictions.

With new routing algorithms, TomTom WORK's truck navigation solution makes it possible for trucks to be kept away from small town roads and narrow residential areas whenever possible.

Typical or maximum truck speeds are also taken into consideration and so the expected arrival times are realistically calculated. All users have to do is enter their vehicle parameters, such as vehicle measurements or axle and total weight, into the TomTom WORK navigation solution. ○

BUILDING SHELTERS OR WINDMILLS IN DIFFICULT ECONOMIC CLIMATE

This month, Anglia Business Solutions explains that fresh produce companies need to examine how to redefine their business models to reflect the tougher trading conditions – and proposes a new solution from Microsoft to do just that

THE CURRENT dire global economic outlook will certainly prove very challenging for businesses across all sectors.

Stories of how the major retailers are reacting are rife across the fresh produce industry. Price-cutting is the norm and suppliers and growers say they are funding the campaigns. As battles for consumers' budgets intensify, this situation is unlikely to improve. In such a climate, it is tempting to scale back all investment expenditure and wait for better times to return.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: "In stormy times, some people build shelters; others build windmills." The reality in the fresh produce industry is that the demand for healthy foods will remain strong, even if the emphasis will focus more on staples than exotics during the current downturn. While nobody can forecast how long it will take for the green shoots of recovery to emerge, history tells us that better times will return. When that happens, those who have weathered the storm will emerge stronger and well positioned to capitalise on the upturn in trading conditions.

What nobody can say with any certainty is how long it will take for economic conditions to recover. The surprising aspect of the current crisis is how quickly it all happened. Six months ago, the outlook on the global economy was very positive. What a difference a few short months can make. The question is, can it rebound as quickly?

So what has all this got to do with technology? The encouraging signs from the industry are that quite a number of companies are taking the time to examine how their business models can be refined to reflect the more austere conditions that they face. When margins are under such severe pressure, organisations are driven to find out where they are either making or losing money. The difficulty that they encounter is gaining access to the detailed information that exposes these trends. Few people with legacy systems can quickly identify their most or least profitable products or most productive pack lines.

Here, a fully integrated, modern end-to-end dynamic enterprise planning solution can help to throw some light on the subject. However,



Will you build a shelter or a windmill as the economic downturn bites?

such solutions mean a significant investment in time and money as well as taking anything between four to nine months to deploy. A state-of-the-art financial application can be rapidly deployed and very beneficial. Nevertheless, the real gains are made when the complete supply chain is seamlessly integrated with the finances. This is where the real operating costs and profitability can be defined and swift management action taken on commercial concerns.

This factor has been recognised by Microsoft, which has launched an initiative designed to assist those companies wishing to invest in their technologies. As the world's largest software company, it is well placed to assist from a financial aspect. The company's turnover last year reached an impressive \$62 billion (£41bn) while they generated pre-tax profits of more than \$22bn. Moreover, their cash or cash equivalent on the balance sheet is more than \$22bn. They have decided to use their massive financial muscle to ease the task of deploying their technologies with a scheme called Smartpay.

Microsoft Smartpay offers a simple, easy and affordable way for customers to purchase the entire end-to-end solution. This includes the Microsoft licences, enhancement and

support, partner services, hardware and even third-party software, all for one monthly fixed cost. This enables the customer to preserve precious cash to sustain their core business and protect existing credit facilities with their bank when required for business expansion.

With no hidden charges, flexible and tailored payments to suit requirements and a quick and easy application process, Microsoft Smartpay is a fantastic way to acquire the solution customers need, rather than one they perceive that they can afford.

The key point is that this is in effect an unsecured loan at a very competitive rate. The current offer is that it comes with an initial six months' payment holiday. This means that the customer begins to see the benefits of the solution as the payments begin.

It is fair to say that this initiative has been welcomed by beleaguered companies wishing to use the downturn to refine and automate their key business processes. These far-sighted companies plan to be around to capitalise on the upturn by using modern technology as a business enabler to improve the productivity of their people.

Details of Microsoft Smartpay can be found on: www.angliabs.com/MSF_Smartpay.aspx ○

QUINTIG WINS FOR WAITROSE

WAITROSE HAS implemented its second planning solution from Quintig in the past 16 months, with the introduction of an initiative to improve the allocation of man hours.

Up until now, Waitrose had been using a legacy application to allocate its human resources in its UK branches. But due to the retailer's expansion, its system had reached almost full capacity, and the store's goal to increase its number of branches by 10 per cent over the next 10 years meant it was time for a new manpower planning system.

Waitrose felt it needed a flexible solution that would let it manage its human resources the 'Waitrose way'. The standard workforce optimisation software solutions already on the market lacked the flexibility the retailer was looking for, but the Quintig architecture, with its fully configurable company requirement, was flexible enough to meet the UK chain's needs.

The Quintig workforce planning solution allows Waitrose branches to interact with the central system allocating man hours, so that they can try different scenarios and 'what if' proposals to maximise opportunities at local level. For example, if a branch manager knows sales in a product group will be influenced by a local event, then he can re-assign resources to ensure staff are re-allocated to support those sales without damaging customer service or profits.

Branch managers are able to optimise the allocation of partners – as Waitrose staff are known, due to the retailer being a member of the John Lewis Partnership – over different time periods and across different retail layout groups.

Quintig, a provider of Advanced Planning and Scheduling (APS) solutions, implemented its solution for back-end TOPS (Transport Optimisation Planning System) in 2007 with Waitrose. The aim was to support the retailer's transport planning, dispatch and yard management.

This new contract brings Quintig into Waitrose's front-end operations systems.

Arjen Heeres, of Quintig, said: "We are delighted that we can expand our support for Waitrose from supply chain planning into human resources planning and can contribute significantly to bottom-line savings. Repeat customers prove to us time and again the importance of positive business relations and the quality of Quintig solutions." ○