

Ingram Brothers integrate with Dynamics AX to improve control, service and profitability

Overview

Customer: Ingram Brothers are one of the UK's leading manufacturers of edible icings, fillings and toppings and a specialist in innovative bakery supplies. The company, which began as a sugar miller over 115 years ago, now operates one of the most technically advanced manufacturing facilities of its kind.

Situation

Ahead of the move to its current 43,000 square feet, purpose-built production facility, Ingram Brothers learned that support was to be withdrawn for its 10-year-old bespoke accounting system.

Solution

Following a thorough review of its options, Ingram Brothers selected Microsoft Dynamics AX from IntegrSYS. Microsoft's long-term road map for Dynamics and IntegrSYS' manufacturing expertise were major deciding factors.

Benefits

- A modern, robust and flexible system with rapid implementation
- Integration and ease of use across the whole business
- Automated streamlined processes for time savings and reduced costs in all areas
- Complete visibility of accurate real-time information
- Fast, easy pricing control for improved profitability
- Enhanced customer service including improved COTIF deliveries
- Improved cash collection and credit control.

"Over the past 30 years I have implemented a number of different systems, mostly accounting systems that had to be bespoke for a production environment. Microsoft Dynamics AX is the best system I've seen - a full-fledged production control system with integrated financials - and it works straight out of the box."

Simon Young, Managing Director, Ingram Brothers

Situation

Ingram Brothers was planning arguably the most ambitious move in its long history - major investment in a new, purpose-built, high-care specification food manufacturing facility.

At this most critical of times, the company's existing business system supplier dropped a bombshell - it announced that it would be withdrawing support for the bespoke system Ingram Brothers relied upon to assist certain business processes.

Ingram Brothers had mixed feelings. The current system, a bespoke product from a small software house, had been installed 10 years earlier but continued to devour hours of expensive programming and support time. There was always a problem that needed fixing and the system lagged far behind the real-time demands of Ingram Brothers' fast-moving food manufacturing business. Also, the system was a long way short of being a complete solution capable of automating and streamlining the company's operations.



The incumbent supplier's proposed route forward - another bespoke system with no firm assurances of greater dependability and longevity - prompted Ingram Brothers to take a long hard look at what they wanted to achieve from investment in technology.

As part of a highly focused assessment of which system should underpin the next stage of their development, Ingram Brothers decided to consult two of its largest and closest customers.

One of those customers was James Fleming & Co, a well-respected manufacturer of specialist products primarily for the bakery, pastry and confectionery industries. The advice and insights offered to Ingram Brothers by Anthony How, Group Financial Director at James Fleming & Co, proved to be more than just food for thought.



Case Study: Ingram Brothers



“When Integrys began the design of our AX system, we made it clear they would need to be robust with us. Even so, we were resistant to change but Integrys held firm to their principles and what they recommended proved to be right time and again. Their expertise in integrated business systems for manufacturing has benefited our business enormously.”

“In Microsoft Dynamics AX we now have a modern, easy to use, robust and highly flexible system that gives us the precise controls we need to manage our complex process manufacturing business.”

Simon Young, Managing Director,
Ingram Brothers

“With Dynamics AX, Integrys enabled us to implement one central business management system which fully integrates and streamlines our business processes.

The new system gives us access to up-to-date and accurate information all of the time, with vastly improved control and management of the business and significant improvements in efficiency, customer service and profitability.”

Angela Wilson,
Finance Manager and Company
Secretary, Ingram Brothers

Solution

When Ingram Brothers’ management team reviewed potential new systems, three considerations were foremost in their minds.

Firstly, they felt that their company, despite its strong product offering and customer-service ethos, was a little old fashioned. Few people in the company used PCs and there was too much reliance on slow, inefficient manual processes. Any new system should be inclusive and capable of taking forward the whole company.

Secondly, whilst the replacement bespoke system had not been ruled out, Ingram Brothers felt they should also look at systems developed specifically for manufacturing. Their existing system was essentially an accounting solution with little or no integration across ordering, stock, production and delivery.

Thirdly, all Ingram Brothers’ products are manufactured under strict controls. Ideally, the new system should be able to integrate key functions such as recipe control and traceability.

James Fleming & Co, one of the customers Ingram Brothers’ consulted, had conducted their own search for the ideal manufacturing business system. This had led them to choose Integrys and Microsoft Dynamics AX. Integrys’ experience with this major customer was to prove invaluable.

Angela Wilson, Finance Manager and Company Secretary at Ingram Brothers, explains: “When we heard the many positive things James Fleming & Co had to say about Dynamics AX, our reaction was, ‘Well, if it

works so well for them, it can work for us’. We are both in food manufacturing and there are many similarities in our businesses.”

Ingram Brothers wasted no time in contacting Integrys to arrange a system demo.

Wilson continues: “The demo underlined just how appropriate Dynamics AX was for us. It met all of our criteria and was the only system we saw that would work for all areas of our manufacturing business without us having to buy separate products. What’s more, it was so easy to use - everything about it just felt right.”

Another key factor was that it was a Microsoft solution, with the same look-and-feel as Microsoft Office applications, with a long-term road map, and supported not only by Integrys but also by other Microsoft Partners globally.



The decision to go with Integrys and Dynamics AX was unanimous.

According to Ingram Brothers’ MD Simon Young: “Thanks to the expertise of Integrys’ staff, our AX system was up and running in under four months. That speed of implementation is almost unheard of in the systems world, but there have been no bugs and there are no weaknesses in the system. Over the past 30 years I have implemented a number of different systems, mostly accounting systems that had to be ‘bespoked’ for a production environment. Microsoft Dynamics AX is the best system I’ve seen - a full-fledged production control system with integrated financials - and it works straight out of the box.”

Benefits

The Managing Director’s view

“For our business to be successful there are three key things I need to be able to view and manage: sales volumes, overhead costs and margins,” says Ingram Brothers’ MD Simon Young.

“Dynamics AX allows me to do just that. With AX I now have a management system that has all our business information in one database. At any point I now have the ability to access up-to-date, accurate information on sales, costs and margins that allows me to manage and grow our business.”

A key benefit is the speed with which accurate management accounts are generated. These are now out within a week of month-end, so the business can react quickly to changes in sales, costs and margins.



Concludes Young: “As well as enabling integration and real-time visibility of our business, our AX system has enabled huge time savings and efficiency gains in all areas - and that has quickly translated into improved customer service and a better, more competitive business.”

Case Study: Ingram Brothers



Master planning drives the complete purchasing, production and delivery cycle

Automated master planning at the core of Dynamics AX delivers huge benefits in areas such as recipe control, stock management and production control.

Now staff know exactly what ingredients they have in stock, what needs to be manufactured, when orders will be delivered to customers, and when stock needs re-ordering. Now staff simply input a query and let the system work everything out.

This has taken huge pressure off the Purchasing and Production Managers. In the past, production planning, stock checking and stock ordering were largely manual processes that took up almost the whole week. Now the same set of regular weekly tasks can be completed in hours.

“Our Microsoft Dynamics AX system gives us maximum visibility and control of product pricing, which is vital as constant shifts in the price of commodities such as sugar and cocoa powder can really cut into our margins. Before AX a pricing review took around four weeks, so we only reviewed prices twice a year. Now with AX a total pricing review takes just a week, so we review five or six times a year, and that has boosted profitability.”

Angela Wilson,
Finance Manager and Company
Secretary, Ingram Brothers

Benefits *continued*

The Technical Manager's view

Andy Robertson, Technical Manager, concurs: “I need daily access to information such as sales history, product data and traceability. In the past I had to access multiple systems using multiple screens and menus. Now, with the AX system, I can access it all on one screen at the touch of a button. I now do my job three to four times faster.”

He adds: “There is now a new culture here. The entire business has huge confidence in the reliability of the decisions we can make based on the information available from Dynamics AX. That's resulted in a big reduction in non-conformance and a significant improvement in customer service.”

The Sales Office view

Brinder Kaur, who is in charge of sales order processing and customer quotations, says. “Customers are always asking for prices and delivery for custom products. Before it used to take us days or weeks to pull together an accurate quotation; now we can do it in hours. Also, AX gives us the ability to forecast with confidence and monitor performance against forecasts.”

The Sales Director's view

Mark Young, Sales Director, agrees: “Dynamics AX now enables us to have the flexibility to rapidly price, produce and deliver tailor-made products for a vast range of customer-specific requirements. Customers are always looking to engineer cost savings into their products, by tweaking ingredients or packaging for example. AX lets us modify products very quickly and involve the customer in the process. They get the right product at the right price, and we are able to show them how we've achieved what they want.”

“Customers are now getting a better and more personal service,” adds Young. “And that's vital for us, as it differentiates our business very strongly against big multinational competitors.”

The Finance Manager's view

For Angela Wilson, Finance Manager and Company Secretary, the benefits of their Dynamics AX system fall into three main areas: Ease of Use, Profitability and Customer Service.

Wilson explains: “Because the system is so easy to use and so well integrated, we've been able to move the whole company forward and

see measurable improvements in all areas. For example, a stocktake now takes only 50% of the time it used to; the goods-inward process is now twice as fast; and a mock product recall (a traceability requirement) now takes under 90 minutes rather than two days.”

“We've also improved profitability in more direct ways, through easier, more automated pricing and margin control,” continues Wilson.

“At the same time the AX system has enabled improved cash collection and credit control by automating daily invoices, account-overdue letters and credit-limit alerts. Since we installed AX we've not had a single bad debt.”

Very importantly, the switch to AX has dramatically improved customer service.

According to Wilson, “COTIF (Complete On Time In Full) delivery performance has risen from under 80% to 99%-plus. This has cut related costs by around 20% - we have fewer follow-on orders, which has reduced haulage costs and penalties for late deliveries.”

Once again, this is a benefit of Dynamics AX automated master planning, which has also enabled more economical purchasing of bulk ingredients.

“In all areas of our operations, Dynamics AX has enabled completely streamlined and automated processes that have cut out time and costs, improved customer service and transformed the way we do business - it just works!” she adds.

Concludes Wilson: “I simply cannot picture us running our business today without Dynamics AX and Integrys. Dynamics AX is the single system at the heart of our entire business, and Integrys is both an extension and an integral part of that business.”



About Integrys Solutions

Integrys is Scotland's most experienced provider of services for solutions based on Microsoft Dynamics AX technologies, including Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Finance & Operations. With our in-depth product knowledge and long experience of working with Scottish-based businesses, you can trust us to provide expert advice and hands-on support.

Integrys is a fully certified Microsoft partner. We were the first organisation in Scotland to be accredited to deliver Microsoft Dynamics AX and can draw on the support of Microsoft's local team of solution specialists, whenever necessary, to achieve our customers' business goals.

Founded in 2002, we have been delivering solutions based on Microsoft Dynamics AX ever since the product was launched. We have extensive experience of working with manufacturing, distribution and project based companies.

Integrys is a privately-owned business based at the Eurocentral industry hub, between Glasgow and Edinburgh. From this convenient, central location on the M8 motorway, we can easily reach customers right across Scotland, providing a personal and responsive level of service.



Integrys clients include:

Caledonian Plywood Company
Ingram Brothers
James Fleming & Co Ltd
Moorbrook Textiles Ltd
Rosti Technical Plastics
Semex
Shin-Etsu Handotai Europe
Tannoy
Terasaki Electric (Europe)
Trespass International Sportswear

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