Bakery feeds 400 percent turnover growth with 123insight

In 2004, Image On Food Ltd needed to move away from its collection of Excel spreadsheets and, after dismissing bakery-specific software as too inflexible, selected 123insight. The system was implemented at the same time as the BRC quality standard and, after going live, lead time accuracy was improved from two weeks to three days, eradicating stock level errors and reducing low shelf life stock by five percent.

Based in Market Drayton, Shropshire, Image On Food Ltd initially took 10 licences, after the series of Excel spreadsheets failed to provide good traceability, stock information and accurate lead time predictions, almost costing the company two major clients. At the time, managing director Tim Hopcroft evaluated a production system specific to the bakery industry, but found that it was not flexible enough for their business.

Since then, and despite a double-dip recession the company has grown significantly, although still subscribes to the same 10 licences as the number of admin staff has not needed to be increased.

Tim Hopcroft says: "Last year (2016) was just shy of £1.4m. I would imagine our turnover has quadrupled since we implemented in 2004. We have the same administration staff but the job roles have become more defined."

Although turnover has increased dramatically stock has increased by just 20 percent. Tim Hopcroft cites that in addition to only buying what the company needs, another reason for this is down to visibility of slower moving items: "If we have 20,000 pieces of ribbon that's not been used for a while we can choose to put it on a line instead of buying others."

The company has to comply with the BRC (British Retail Consortium) quality standard, but since implementing 123insight audits have never been a problem.

"We just had an audit last week. We were given four hours to do a full forward and backward trace on an item. We did it in 20 minutes, and that was taking our time as well."

123insight's monthly subscription model means that Image On Food always have access to the latest version without any software upgrade costs. A recent update included a new 'implode' feature, which Tim Hopcroft found extremely useful:

"The implode trace is just phenomenal. We can literally select a batch of dried egg whites that will last us three months and will be used in 300,000 products, and we now know each batch of gingerbread men that this batch of egg whites has gone into."

Tracking of customer conversations was something that Image On Food had previously stored in Outlook contact and notes fields, but a subsequent upgrade to 123 Insight's CRM+ means that everything is now in one place.

Gemma Williams, senior product manager says: "What that has meant for us is definitely speed. When raising quotes, it links directly into the customer contact, which automatically sets an action to follow up on the quote, and also provides us with any previous notes. We can quickly download a list of addresses for online mailshots or postal addresses. It's also very useful as it's no longer just stored in someone's head. That was the big problem before. Someone might be speaking to one member of staff one day and then speak to someone else a couple of days later who wouldn't know about the previous conversation. Now we store all notes about

previous conversations on CRM+ and anyone is able to access them."

The company has in-house SQL expertise and has expanded on 123insight's functionality by drawing live information from its databases along with its own and then reshaping it in Excel. This has helped them reach other targets, such as reducing the number of tools on the shop floor.

Tim Hopcroft adds: "Our works order list tool numbers, and we can run a query to list all of the tools required for the coming week. So whereas before we might have 200 tools in the bakery, now we only have what we need for the week, with the rest of the tools stored off the shop floor. As a result, the bakery now has more space. It was part of the full picture of clearing the clutter out of the production areas, cataloguing tools and only issuing what was needed for the day or week."

Gemma Williams adds that the possibility for human error has been reduced, as not only are there less tools on the shop floor but also works orders have a picture of the finished product, adding further clarity.

The company has revamped its previous bonus scheme, as a result of staff feedback, to be performance-based, and the Shop Floor Data Control provides all of the raw information required to calculate this.

Gemma Williams continues: "Staff felt frustrated that some people were working 150 percent and others at only 50 percent, yet getting the same rate of pay. In order to get the decorating bonus, they have to be able to decorate over 50 percent of the lines produced in the quarter and to be over the target times allowed for decorating that product. That's ensuring that everyone gets trained on every single line, everybody has a chance to decorate every line and expand their decorating skills base, and it also answers the staff issue of performance-related pay."

On Food receives a regular visit from 123insight Customer Care staff and this has proven extremely useful over time, with each visit helping them to identify new ways to use the software. Gemma Williams comments: "When they come in they see how we use the software and will often chip in to say 'did you know you can do this?'. It's just little things but it makes such a big difference. It's great being able to show them something rather than just via screenshots or over the phone."

Although the company has subscribed to 123insight for well over a decade, Tim Hopcroft still feels that he gets value for money over the traditional approach of purchasing a system: "When we first took the system on, the subscription model was good because we were getting a lot for our money but not outlaying much in one go. I think at the time 123insight was probably groundbreaking but now subscriptions are everywhere. It's the way of the world. Even if you buy the latest software, assuming you can still buy it, you still have to buy updates, support and everything else. You have to value that monthly payment and ask if it's adding value to the business. You haven't got to justify £35,000. You've just got to justify it month to month."

Since implementing 123insight, Image On Food has recommended the system to several other companies in the food industry, with Tim Hopcroft believing that the system has helped to feed their growth over the years.

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