



making technology pay!

Fresh Produce Journal IT Monthly – Article 10
Published January 2005

The Story So Far

May I start by belatedly wishing all of the readers of the Fresh Produce journal a prosperous 2005. Failing that and given the vagaries of the industry, perhaps getting through relatively unscathed may be more appropriate. Since the first of my articles on IT appeared in March of last year, many people have commented on how useful they have proved. The general consensus is that they were written from a business perspective and the usual techno babble or jargon was conspicuous by its absence. I thought that it may be helpful to start the year by summarising the topics covered to date.

In the first article, I focused on the role that IT can play in the business and flagged the fact that with margins continually being squeezed, a well implemented solution could make the difference between success and failure. The consolidation of IT players servicing the industry was flagged as well as the entry of global players such as Microsoft & SAP. The new solutions bring world class flexible core applications to the industry that are ideally suited to supply chain integration while significantly reducing operating costs.

The second article provided some insights into how to select an appropriate business management solution. It highlighted the fact that this was no longer an IT but a strategic business issue. This suggested cross company consultation as part of the requirements gathering exercise. Assessing the financial strength of the vendor was stressed as you wouldn't want to have to change solutions in less than seven years of deploying the new system. Paying attention to the flexibility and future proofing of the selected option was mentioned as this would pay significant dividends as the future customer demands increase.

In the third article, the focus was on identifying a suitable technology partner. The difference between the direct and indirect model was mentioned as well as the importance of evaluating the approach to your enquiry. The technique of carrying out a few basic checks was covered as well as where to gather relevant information. Assessing the deployment processes and the implementation team was detailed as well as ensuring that references were thoroughly checked.



making technology pay!

Having the correct technology infrastructure to deliver your brand new business information system was the topic of the next article. After all, a poorly built server platform can have a significant negative impact on the performance of the solution. The article described all of the components that have to work together faultlessly to deliver stable and secure solutions. The trend towards “thin client” was covered as well as using the power of the Internet to economically provide remote and mobile workers with access to vital updated client and product information.

In the next article, the topic of supply chain integration was covered. This stressed the desire of the major multiples to seamlessly link their systems to those of their suppliers as a means of speeding up communication as well as reducing costs. In addition, the new directives on product traceability were becoming a major business driver for change. Some examples of seamless supply chain operations were outlined as well as some of the newly available technologies designed specifically to meet these requirements.

The last publication posed the question of whether business intelligence in today’s fast moving fresh produce industry was a luxury or a necessity. The article highlighted the fact that directors and senior company managers were becoming the highest paid administrators in the business as they struggle to assemble all of the information required to manage the growth of the organisation.

It outlined some of the key performance indicators, alerts and reports that make up a business intelligence solution. It also explained why it was important that these are aligned to the goals of the organisation and that in future executives would need to gauge the performance of the business across all levels. It ended with the quote “If you think that knowledge is expensive, try ignorance” which alludes to the fact that hidden costs and inefficient processes can seriously damage the health of a business.

Hopefully, summarising the previous articles in this format should help those currently considering whether their current IT systems are an asset or a liability to the business.

For further information email linkfresh@angliabs.com