

ANGLIA'S LINKFRESH NAV SYSTEM HITS RIGHT SPOT FOR PRODUCE WORLD GROUP

This month, Anglia Business Solutions outlines its successful deployment of LINKFresh NAV at Produce World Group. The system has had a huge impact on the day-to-day running of the business, explains ceo William Burgess and his colleagues



William Burgess, ceo of Produce World

WHEN £250 million turnover firm Produce World Group set out on its ambitious expansion plans three years ago, IT was seen as a key strategic aid.

As ceo William Burgess explains: "It is all too easy to lose control when in growth mode. Our internal systems needed to be first class to ensure that we had access to accurate and timely information through and beyond the growth phase. It was therefore vital that our due diligence during the selection process was thorough. In finally selecting LINKFresh NAV, we now know that we got it right."

The group had two different legacy business management solutions in place at various subsidiaries. The requirement was to adopt a single, modern information platform to serve the needs of the group. "Having selected LINKFresh NAV, we could have deployed a different version in each subsidiary," explains group finance director Ian Batkin. "However, in discussions with Anglia, a longer-term strategic view was devised and adopted. Dubbed Project Dynamic,

the deployment involved the design of a comprehensive Produce World generic solution. While this initially would take longer, the theory was that the subsequent roll-outs would be quicker. Moreover, we would also be in a position to draw performance comparisons across our various subsidiaries."

Once the strategy was agreed, a resource plan was devised to manage the roll-out, including significant amounts of training for users in all areas. Dedicated teams from Anglia and Produce World were selected and an operations room was equipped to house the team. The team worked to a blueprint produced by Anglia, where the requirements of the various subsidiaries were consolidated into a single design document.

"We set out with a clear vision of how the system would be designed and deployed," explains IT manager David Jones. "The Anglia and Produce World personnel worked as one team to deliver the group application. Involving key experienced people from across the group was particularly important – their involvement in mapping working practices has also been key to the success of the project to present. The focus was on producing a solution that precisely met the business needs of the organisation, both in the short term and in the foreseeable future."

The group solution consisted of a range of fully integrated applications that tackled all of the operational parts of the businesses within the group. It included Forecasting, EDI, Production Scheduling, Consignment Trading, Inventory Control, Lot Traceability, Growers' Returns, Finance and Business Intelligence.

Touch screens were deployed in the packhouses to monitor progress throughout the supply chain, while providing vital feedback to supervisory staff. A range

of powerful innovative mobile applications were deployed to manage inventory and perform quality control (QC) and other checks on the produce. Status reports on order progress were made available on LCD screens, while alerts were enabled to warn supervisory staff on possible supply chain glitches using mobile phones.

Once deployed and operational, the Produce World LINKFresh NAV solution made an immediate positive business impact, as Batkin explains. "With our legacy systems, it was very difficult to get a timely, totally accurate and consistent handle on costs," he says. "Being a real-time system, LINKFresh provided us with full visibility of produce, packaging and labour costs as they were incurred. We were then able to detect and react quickly to anomalies accordingly. We were also able to consolidate financial information across the group. As a result, we have already made significant cost savings that justify our investment."

Business unit director Jon Pollard also detected some valuable improvements as a result of the LINKFresh NAV deployment. "Being a real-time system made a massive difference to our stock management," he says. "Previously, we were lucky if the stock was accurate once a day. Now, it is always up to date. We have also been able to make refinements to our operating procedures. These have helped us to better understand and manage our labour costs. The effort required on product traceability is also greatly reduced. What used to take eight hours is now reduced to about 15 minutes with LINKFresh NAV."

Waste reduction is another area where the impact of the system has been felt. "One of the major issues in the fresh produce industry is waste," says Burgess. "In this business, order fulfilment takes place on the same day as the order is received. Having too little produce means that you are

short: having too much means that the surplus is thrown away. Getting it correct by having accurate and timely information has a positive overall impact."

The system has also been well received by users. "The shop floor loves it: the technical people love it," Pollard explains. "I have never been involved in an implementation that has got the benefits so quickly."

Customers will have also noticed the difference, as Batkin says. "The major retailers operate a fines regime to penalise or discourage adverse performance," he says. "Since implementing LINKFresh NAV, to my knowledge, we have not incurred a single fine."

Customer satisfaction has also improved. Burgess says: "By having good information on which stock we have got in our supply chain, it gives us at least a half of a percentage point increase in customer satisfaction. This puts us at the head of the league table. This means that we get more growth with those customers."

The system is now a key strategic aid in the future growth of the Produce World Group, as Batkin outlines. "Produce World is an ambitious business," he says. "We will acquire other companies. The LINKFresh NAV system will enable us to do things consistently in

an accurate and timely way across the group. This will give us visibility of the group as an entirety."

LINKFresh NAV has now been successfully deployed in three of the Produce World subsidiaries. The latest implementation at Isleham Fresh Produce involved all aspects of the solution, from forecasting to despatch. The in-depth functionality of the system, coupled with the deployment skills of the Produce World team, meant that the solution was fully implemented within an impressive two-month timescale.

Burgess adds: "The LINKFresh NAV system has totally transformed Produce World. It means that we now have good information at the touch of a button. It was one of the best decisions that we have ever made." ○



Innovative mobile applications manage inventory and QC



Touch screens capture real-time shop floor data