



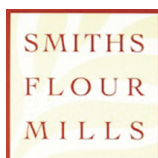
Customer Success Story
SAP Mid-Market Solution

SMITHS FLOUR MILLS

DELIVERING A COMPLETE SAP SOLUTION IN JUST TEN WEEKS

Smiths Flour Mills manufactures a unique range of flours and cereal ingredients based on wheat, maize and rice, predominantly to customer specifications. Recently the company has introduced an exciting range of non-chlorinated cake flours made using specialised heat treatment technology.

With a staff of 150, Smiths Flour Mills operates from three well-equipped sites in the UK, including Worksop, where a state-of-the-art facility was opened in 1999.



Since 1972 Smiths Flour Mills had been part of the Northern Foods Group. However, in January 2007 it was sold to Vision Capital, which necessitated a review of the systems that were being used to run the business.

“Northern Foods’ business model is to deliver the systems its companies use from a shared services centre,” explains Frank Coulson, Financial Accountant, Smiths Flour Mills. “A transition services agreement for twelve months was agreed when we were bought by Vision Capital. Although it could have been extended, Vision Capital was keen to start the process of looking for a new system quickly.”

Vision Capital employed third party consultants to produce an Invitation to Tender (ITT). The company worked closely with Smiths Flour Mills, and the three other companies that had been acquired by Vision Capital at the same time, to specify their requirements.

However, in June 2007 Smiths Flour Mills was sold on to another company. “As the work on the ITT was well advanced it made sense for us to engage with the consultants Vision Capital had been using to help us select our own system,” says Frank.

MEETING BUSINESS NEEDS

With no other companies to consider, the ITT was made more specific to Smiths Flour Mills’ requirements and sent out to a wide range of vendors. The consultants managed the process and made recommendations, with the result that the candidates for selection were reduced to two. After due consideration Smiths Flour Mills chose SAP ERP software from Chelford SAP Solutions.

“As a Northern Foods company we had been using SAP software,” says Frank. “We knew the processes involved and that it could meet our requirements. In addition, we were concerned at how long the training curve might be for new software, which is often underestimated. This was particularly important as we wanted to implement in a very short time frame - just two and a half months.”

“During the tendering process we were very impressed with Chelford,” Frank continues. “It was clear from the start that their sales people and consultants really wanted to deliver a solution that would meet our business needs. Their approach was quite unique, in that they



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Frank Coulson, Financial Accountant

sent in a team to see how we were already using SAP so they could replicate it. They were also extremely flexible.”

FAST IMPLEMENTATION

The timescale for implementing the system was tight. Smiths Flour Mills wanted it up and running for the start of their new financial year in April 2008 - just ten weeks away.

Frank put together a project team of representatives from all the major functions - operations, the warehouse, sales, distribution and finance. They each worked closely with Chelford’s consultants to define how the system would be set up. A key element of the process was using standard SAP functionality wherever possible.

“Northern Foods had modified its SAP installation quite heavily and we had seen the effects and problems,” says Frank. “It made it difficult and expensive to take new upgrades of the software. So, although we looked at enhancing our processes where we could, we stuck to standard SAP as much as possible. In some cases that meant delaying the implementation of some requirements until after the initial implementation.”

To speed the implementation Smiths Flour Mills was also realistic about how much data should be migrated. “We worked closely with Chelford to identify the master data that needed to be transferred from the Northern Foods system,” explains Frank. “Some of it wasn’t straightforward, because Northern Foods used bespoke fields. Chelford wrote and tested the upload programmes for us.”

At the same time as the implementation of the system was going ahead, Digica was implementing a new IT infrastructure for it to run on. “Chelford and Digica worked together very well,” says Frank.

“Chelford were very flexible and delivered everything they said they would. I can’t say better than that.”

Frank Coulson, Financial Accountant

SMOOTH GO-LIVE

Go-live itself was planned for the first week in April. A plan was agreed between Northern Foods, Smiths Flour Mills and Chelford. Data was uploaded late on the Saturday and everything was finished on the Sunday. By Monday everything was operating normally. “It all went very smoothly,” says Frank, “which was down to the pre-planning and the commitment of the people involved.”

“Looking back, completing the implementation in just ten weeks was a great achievement”, continues Frank. “It’s a great testament to all the people involved from Smiths Flour Mills and Chelford that we managed to pull it off.”

BENEFITS

Smiths Flour Mills main aim was to re-implement an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system as an independent company.

“We took advantage of quick wins where we could as went along,” says Frank. “For example, we self-bill the majority of

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materials and it was absolutely essential that we could keep that capability. But, actually, we were able to extend it to haulage, which has been a bonus as it enables us to reduce our costs. However, the key objective was to have our own system and we’ve achieved that.”

“SAP has everything you could want in it, probably far more than we will ever need,” continues Frank. “Chelford were able to integrate the bar-code scanning in our warehouse with it. As we make greater use of its facilities I am sure it will deliver more advantages in the future.”

Frank is also very complementary about Chelford. “Chelford’s people are very knowledgeable, good at communication and worked well as a team,” he says. “They were very flexible, which was important with such a short timescale for the implementation, and they delivered everything they said they would. I can’t say better than that.”

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