



LOOKING FORWARD

D&W FINE PACK KEEPS FOOD AND FORECASTS FRESH

You know those irresistible snack and dip trays at your supermarket? The ones that are perfect for munching during a Sunday afternoon football game? The non-edible parts probably came from D&W Fine Pack. So did the bundled plastic knife and fork—and the sugar and powdered creamer set if you take coffee on the go.

D&W Fine Pack provides a wide range of products to the food-service and food packaging industries through 13 facilities in the United States and Canada. The company is owned by Mid Oaks Investments, a private firm that invests capital in mid-market companies with good potential for growth.

D&W Fine Pack's customers range from food franchises such as Chipotle® to grocery chains including Wal-Mart® and food distributors such as U.S. Food Service. The company operates in three distinct channels: Foodservice Distribution, National Account Restaurants (such as Chick-fil-A®), and the Grocery/Food Processor channel. These channels have one thing in common: they're demanding.

“When our customers place an order, they want their product, so it's critical that we service them in the timeframe we promise,” explains Frances Rizzo, Director of Marketing Communications, D&W Fine Pack. “In addition, we don't want to hang onto inventory, and neither do our customers or distributors. Some of our distributors sell 10,000 different items, and they don't have a lot of space for inventory.”

CENTRALIZING FORECASTING

D&W Fine Pack clearly needed its business systems to support faster turnover of products. But because the company had grown through a series of acquisitions, it was operating with a diverse range of software systems, including several ERP platforms. In 2010, D&W Fine Pack's forecasting planners, supply chain managers, and purchasing and IT staff from several plants met to review proposals from forecasting software vendors—including Demand Solutions, which was already in use at one of the company's plants. After comparing their options, D&W Fine Pack's leadership decided to implement Demand Solutions as a company-wide standard. The company initially went live in six plants with plans to expand.



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~ Mike Loquercio, D&W Fine Pack
Area Director, Supply Chain



With Demand Solutions as their forecasting hub, D&W Fine Pack's plant managers and supply chain staff can now review accurate forecasts in an Excel spreadsheet or ERP system. Production managers and procurement staff use the current forecast to purchase materials and schedule production.

D&W Fine Pack's plants that use Demand Solutions can link their forecasts to the ERP system and optimize their staffing—a major challenge for the company. About half the company's plants operate twenty-four-seven, while several others run five days a week but can expand to six or seven to meet demand. The plants vary from 15 to more than 100 employees per shift. That's why it's critical for D&W Fine Pack to get forecasting and staffing right.

BETTER SERVICE, SMALLER INVENTORY


With Demand Solutions, D&W Fine Pack has transformed itself from a backward-looking organization to a forward-thinking company. "In years past, planning was an absolute nightmare with people who had no way to forecast," explains Loquercio, "Everything was backward looking. With Demand Solutions Forecast Management and Requirements Planning, we've actually been able to look forward for the next 12 months."

That's no small accomplishment in some of the company's facilities. For example, one plant that's tied to school demand was recently able to spend the summer building up its inventory. "In previous years, their

inventory was nearly exhausted by June," says Chris Ward. "Now, the inventory is back to levels where we're able to meet the schools' demand when students return from break."

D&W Fine Pack previously lacked a way to track historical forecasts and sales. With Demand Solutions Forecast Management, the company now has a baseline for future forecasts.

Not only is D&W Fine Pack generating more accurate and relevant forecasts, but the efficiency of the company's planning process has increased dramatically. Forecasting now takes just three days, compared to 10 previously. That's especially important to D&W Fine Pack because a significant portion of its production revolves around custom orders. For Chick-fil-A's new line of salads, the company developed a custom plastic container with a black base and clear, embossed lid. D&W Fine Pack also manufactures salad snack containers with separate compartments for carrots, celery, and dip, and a custom-designed chocolate chip cookie display, which holds cookies at a slant for better visibility on the shelf.

"The supply chain in any business tries to minimize the cash invested in inventory and minimize the amount of inventory that's slow-moving and obsolete," concludes Loquercio. "With Demand Solutions, we've improved service to our customers while achieving lower overall inventory and less expediting of freight." 

"We needed to centralize forecasting and start using the same methodology across plants," says Chris Ward, Manager of Forecasting and Planning, D&W Fine Pack.

"We liked Demand Solutions because it was a total package solution." Today, the Demand Solutions system downloads data from D&W Fine Pack's ERP systems into Requirements Planning and uploads Forecast Management data into the company's MRP system.

Rolling out Demand Solutions Forecast Management generally took just one to two weeks per facility. Meanwhile, implementing Demand Solutions Requirements Planning and running a discovery session took one month per facility, followed by another six weeks of configuration and fine-tuning. Throughout the process, D&W Fine Pack's IT and cross-functional team worked closely with Bryan Dahlfors, one of Demand Solutions' Client Services Representatives.

OPTIMIZING STAFFING

D&W Fine Pack seeks to respond immediately to the changing needs of its customers and distributors across the U.S. Demand Solutions helps make that possible. "Our business isn't like an automotive manufacturer where they can use JD Powers and give forecasts," says Loquercio. "We're totally consumer driven. We see spikes around sports events. Some of our business ships through distributors, and they'll see regional impacts due to the Super Bowl or a high school or college tournament. We even see demand being driven by holidays on which families prepare fancier dinners, and by school calendars."

