



Graceland Fruit: XSOL eliminates the paper

In 2003, Graceland Fruit had purchased a new ERP system, PRONTO Xi, from Pronto North America, which would enable it to upgrade its current manufacturing and financial systems. In later discussions with Pronto, Graceland Fruit's IT Manager, Gary Michalek, and ERP Project Manager, Craig Farkas, were introduced to a Business Process System that had been developed in New Zealand - XSOL.

"In installing Pronto Xi across our company's business functions – finance, inventory management, manufacturing, logistics, and purchasing – we did not have really well-documented business processes, nor any way to easily define them."

XSOL appeared to be the ideal solution to this problem. "There was a synergy between the two systems to help us redefine and automate our business processes with XSOL" explains Gary.

Graceland Fruit spent the next few months actively working on mapping out its business processes. They hired a graduate from Michigan State University, Megan McLain, to be Graceland's XSOL scribe. She completed a brief training session and became proficient in XSOL very quickly, despite not having a technical background.

Megan worked with the department managers to define and map the processes they were responsible for – some were highly complex, involving 50 to 60 tasks and worked horizontally across the company impacting on a number of different areas.

"In some ways it was good that Megan didn't know our business all that well. She would ask the team questions on anything she didn't understand including the reasoning behind the way a process was designed. This often forced us to rethink the way in which we did things."

Craig Farkas provided technical back up to Megan and says the physical mapping of Graceland Fruit's business processes flowed extremely well, "The flow charting part of the mapping is so clean and easy to visualise that you immediately get a clear idea as to how it all flows."

Craig describes the process mapping as being like turning on a light bulb. "You could see the managers' eyes light up as they realised the possibilities. They would start mapping the process, which got them talking about what was necessary, which in turn identified

Organisation

Graceland Fruit, Inc. processes fruits and vegetables by infusing and then drying or freezing them for global customers to use in their own products, such as baked goods, cereals, ice cream, and yogurts.

Located on the shores of Lake Michigan in Frankfort, Michigan, Graceland Fruit has two manufacturing plants employing 180 people with approximately \$40 million dollars in annual sales.

Application

Automated Process that interacts with core ERP systems: Order Entry, Production Planning, Order Shipment, Inventory and Accounting.

Business Issue

- Requirement to understand core business processes
- New ERP system implementation
- Re-entering of information
- Cross-training of key staff members

XSOL CASE STUDY



what was unnecessary. The first draft from XSOL was very different than the final outcome”.

The discussion around defining the business process tasks often took place before the mapping process itself was undertaken. There was a lot of information to assess as many of the processes impacted simultaneously on sales and marketing, logistics and manufacturing.

“It was important that each team figured out what they really needed to achieve before going to Megan. There was a good deal more communication between departments and teams as a result,” says Craig.

Having mapped the processes, the next step was to use XSOL to transform these processes into real-time business applications. According to Gary, “We had many processes documented at many different levels. What made the proposition so unique was the fact that XSOL goes beyond documenting to actually automate and execute your processes. XSOL walks people through the tasks in each process. You can have 50 to 60 tasks in a process and XSOL systematically takes you through each one, offering options and exceptions as they occur.”

“It was impressive the way you could go seamlessly from XSOL to the ERP system or desktop application and back - to deliver, implement and record every action and response that was required,” said Craig.

“For example, the process to obtain Certificates of Analysis, required to go out with every shipment, was a manual paper process involving several different departments. With XSOL automating the procedure, it streamlined the process and avoided re-writing of information and delays waiting for responses from personnel.”

“Also, because the critical screens in Pronto ERP are automatically brought up for you by XSOL, as and when you need them, you eliminate having to constantly refer to menus.” “No longer do I have to wade through a huge menu system to try to find a transaction screen or report item – it comes to you. There is no more writing down how to find something or being in doubt if you have the right screen,” explains Gary.

This replicability is most important for an operation like Graceland Fruit – directly addressing the requirement to cross-train critical staff. “In Customer Service, if one of our representatives is out, the XSOL automation will take their replacement automatically through the necessary tasks and processes screen by screen and will not allow them to miss a step.”

The XSOL software also assisted with prioritising the delivery of Business Processes when Graceland Fruit found it simply didn’t have the resources to implement all of its processes at once. Having accurately mapped them, Graceland was able to identify the vital operational processes so they could be implemented first.

Finally, from a technical stand point Gary believes XSOL is a winner. “XSOL is an IT-friendly software package as it does not tax technical resources, nor is it a computer hog. Everyone that uses a desktop PC has both Pronto and XSOL installed on it. It is very easy to roll-out to users and for them to use it. Our next challenge is to make sure it is being utilized to its fullest capacity by everyone in the company and that will require implementing something of a cultural shift.

“I have been involved with packaged software for some 35 years. XSOL is a good group of very smart people who deliver an excellent product and support.”