



Waller Flowerseed Company

Navision's Axapta Integrated Enterprise Solution software is helping a growing hybrid flowerseed developer – Waller Flowerseed Company – keep up with its expanding worldwide business and compete effectively with larger rivals by delivering just-in-time production, order, shipping and financial information to company managers. The Navision Axapta solution has helped Waller Flowerseed cut hours a day from the once-time consuming chore of reentering order information. It has also streamlined processes ranging from customizing shipping labels to tracking lots of seeds for better quality control.

Company Profile

Waller Flowerseed is a privately held research company that develops new varieties of flowers. They produce seeds for flowers in California, Chile, Indonesia and other locations around the world selling through a global network of professional distributors who in turn sell the seeds to growers who sell the plants to chain stores. The company has 63 employees at their nine-acre California headquarters location in Guadelupe and in nearby Santa Maria.

Situation

When Waller Flowerseed formed its research department in 1989 and began an active breeding program, it meant that the company would be competing against several very large companies. Waller Flowerseed managers decided that they needed to overcome the limitations of their old,

separate accounting, inventory and production systems if they were going to keep up with explosive growth, compete with their larger rivals, and head off a Y2K problem.

Business Solution

Waller Flowerseed began its search for a software solution in 1997, identifying ten potential programs before narrowing it down to two. The company chose Navision's Axapta product in April 1998 when Navision Business Partner Menlo Technology Group guaranteed that they could make the Navision Axapta solution work in Waller Flowerseed's unique environment. The company liked the Navision Axapta product because it conforms to Microsoft NT and SQL

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Server platforms. But most of all, the Navision Axapta software fits the business, rather than requiring that the business fit the software.

Benefits

Since implementing the Navision Axapta solution, Waller Flowerseed has experienced enhanced productivity, improved inventory control, and better customer service performance. The company has consolidated customer service, operations and shipping and receiving into one department and cut logistical time in half. There is no duplication of data entry, eliminating possible errors and saving several hours each day. Customers are happy because information about their orders is available in “real time.” The Navision Axapta system customizes labels to include information required for shipments to international customers, and a customized “lot tracking” feature enhances quality control by identifying seeds throughout the production and sales process.

Waller Flowerseed: Staying in bloom through rapid growth

Founded in 1912, the company was purchased by the David Colegrave Group in 1989. Up to that point, the company had 4,000 acres dedicated to open pollination and producing commodity seeds. The new owner decided to expand the business to include an active breeding program. They built additional greenhouses, hired research scientists, and made a commitment to hybrid development.

Now, most of the production is hybrid varieties grown in greenhouse conditions, although there are about

250 acres of open pollinated seeds in production in California. Today, Waller Flowerseed Company has an extensive breeding and support staff to ensure that their customers are supplied with the finest seed products available, including Vintage Compact Stocks, Sorbet Violas, Regatta Lobelias, Riviera Lobelias, Pacifica Vincas, and Mediterranean Vincas.

Growth and competition dictate a new system

The company has tripled its number of employees since 1989. But Waller Flowerseed not only expanded in size but in the scope of their business as well, allowing them to compete in a larger arena.

According to Andrew G. Blodgett, president of Waller Flowerseed, who grew up in the industry working in his family’s nursery in Michigan, some of their competitors are divisions of multinational pharmaceutical companies. These companies have invested billions of dollars in hybrid research in the course of efforts to develop new pharmaceuticals.

Blodgett and other managers determined that they needed a new integrated system that could keep up with Waller Flowerseed’s rapidly growing business and allow them to compete with their larger rivals. “Initially, we started looking at a new system because we felt we had a Y2K problem,” says Blodgett. “But we also were concerned because our existing systems – we had separate accounting, inventory and production systems – were not integrated. We felt that as the business was growing, we needed to find a solution that could bring international production,

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accounting and operations together using the same information.”

Searching for the right solution

Waller Flowerseed began its search for a new system in 1997 and decided to go with the Navision Axapta program at the strong recommendation of the Menlo Technology Group, which has been a Navision Business Partner since August 1997.

“We chose the Navision Axapta program mainly because Menlo assured us that they could make the Navision Axapta application fit our business, rather than forcing our business to fit the software. But we also liked it because it seemed to be user friendly and it conforms to Microsoft NT and SQL Server platforms,” Blodgett says.

“The flexibility of the product means we are able to add and change fields that are specific to our business,” Blodgett adds. He notes that the company’s international business and the Navision Axapta program’s multi-currency capability influenced the decision to choose the software package. Blodgett says, “Right now, all of our transactions are done in US dollars, but it is nice to have the ability to adapt to multiple currencies as we plan for the future.”

A solution for the ‘perfect’ client

The installation was completed in October 1998. The old and new systems only ran parallel for a couple of weeks, before the Navision Axapta program went live. There are about 20 users of the new system in financial, general administration, operations, production, and sales/marketing departments. Blodgett expects that they will add an additional five to

ten users in the research and development department in the near future.

“Our first installation at Waller Flowerseed Company has been an excellent experience ,” explains Jennifer Sewell, director of operations for Menlo Technology Group. “They have been the ‘perfect’ client for an installation of the Navision Axapta solution. We were able to fit the product to their business because of we maintained an open line of communication and believed that the product would work well once it was completely installed.”

Waller Flowerseed’s network is running both Windows NT and Novell, with Novell handling print services and log-ins. The company uses Microsoft SQL Server 6.5, but anticipates upgrading to Version 7.0. The server hardware is a Dell PowerEdge 2300 PII 450 single processor with 512 MB RAM and a 9 GB RAID 1 Hard Drive. Workstation configurations vary. Heavy users work on PII 300-350 MHz machines with 64-128 MB RAM. Lighter users are running Pentium 100 and 64+ MB RAM.

The first phase of implementation was the financial and accounting package, followed by the installation of the trade and logistics series. Because Waller Flowerseed’s busiest production season runs from November to February, the company decided to delay installation of the Navision Axapta production series until earlier this year.

“We are not expecting that we will need much customization for the production package,” Blodgett says. “It will be nice to have it implemented. For the

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accounting, trade and logistics packages there were some modifications, but the Menlo Technology Group people and our staff moved through that rather rapidly.”

“Tremendous” benefits

According to Blodgett the Navision Axapta system has “tremendous” benefits. Menlo Technology Group made programming modifications in order to deliver customized capabilities to Waller Flowerseed. The Navision Axapta product’s flexible platform made these industry specific modifications possible.

One such customized feature is a “lot tracking” capability. This feature makes it possible to identify seeds throughout the process. Blodgett explains that for quality control purposes, it is important to be able to identify in which country and location the seed was produced, who it is sold to, and the rates of germination. Even though a lot of seeds may be divided into ten sub-lots in Waller Flowerseed’s inventory, the company is still able to identify the seed throughout the process.

Blodgett sees the Navision Axapta program’s attention to multinational detail and ability to alter procedures to meet the requirements of various countries as another plus. For example, he says, “The new system makes it possible for us to change things for specific countries. For example, if we are shipping seeds to Australia and New Zealand, the species and variety name of each plant has to be on the package, otherwise the seeds cannot enter the country. Before, we printed the information on the package by hand or with a typewriter. The Navision Axapta system can

customize the labels to include that information for those countries, so there is no additional work.”

Another benefit is having information that everyone uses in one system,” he explains. “We were able to consolidate customer service in our operations department, along with shipping and receiving. That cuts logistical time down by more than half.” Using the old system, after customer service received and entered an order, the order was taken back to operations, where it was reentered manually, then sent to the shipping department for packaging, where the information was again reentered. When the order was ready to ship, the information would be returned to customer service, where it was once again reentered into their system for tracking. “Now that we have an integrated system, all of this is generated on the fly,” Blodgett states.

“We’re very happy with the results,” Blodgett adds. “But our customers are happier because we have information about their order available immediately. When they ask a question, we can answer it, wherever their order is in our system. We can notify them if there are potential problems, or we can let them know if we can ship their order earlier than originally expected.”

“Our goal is to understand a client’s business well enough to provide a solution that fits their needs,” Sewell says. “Part of the solution is often a better business management software. The Navision Axapta software fits that criteria better than any of the other solutions. The Navision Axapta application is a much

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more robust product. It is flexible in its design and makes changes or additions to installations relatively simple. Our customer's are small to mid-sized businesses, looking to integrate their entire business process into one software package. Though all ERP solutions are meant to do this, the Navision Axapta solution just seems to do it better."

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Menlo Technology Group (MTG) is a premier value-added reseller (VAR) of Navision's Axapta Integrated Enterprise Solution as well as an information technology solutions provider for small- to medium-sized companies. Established in 1997 as a consulting division of Rent-a-Computer, Inc., Menlo Technology Group's mission is to turn knowledge and experience into customized solutions that help clients streamline operations, utilize resources and optimize productivity.

About Navision a/s

Navision a/s is a leading global provider of cost-effective and adaptable integrated business solutions that help companies in their quest to grow. The company has 124,500 customers worldwide, a global network of more than 2,000 partners, and 1,130 employees in 25 countries. The Navision product line consists of Navision Axapta[?], Navision Financials[?]/Navision Attain[?], and Navision XAL[?]. Navision a/s was created through the merger of Navision Software a/s and Damgaard A/S in December 2000. Its shares are listed on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange (CSE: NAVI). The company is headquartered in Vedbaek, Denmark. You can learn more about Navision a/s on the Internet at www.navision.com.

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