

WFL profiting with Prophet

Key Features

- Sales order management
- Grower distribution management
- Real time web based grower interaction
- Grower web based packing/picking instructions
- Grower web based confirmation of shipping
- Warehouse and Web Tesco ASN, M&S
- RFID Product Location Management
- Integrated warehouse management
- Integrated packhouse management
- Integrated packhouse traceability
- Powerful grower lot accounting
- Account sale/firm price agreed after sale deals
- Powerful grower pool/assessments/commission/charge recoveries
- Grower return by original product units after packing
- Grower/Freight self billing
- Powerful customer/grower/product profitability statistics

Key Benefits

- Faster/cheaper product distribution
- Higher volumes at higher prices
- Lowers operating overheads
- More competitive sales prices
- Higher grower returns
- Trust in transparent returns
- Supplier base increases
- Long term market share gains

Technology

- Prophet Pr2 Client Applications
- Prophet Pr2 Mobile Hand Held Applications
- Prophet Pr2 Web Applications
- .Net Development
- XML Electronic Data Interchange
- Crystal Reports
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft Windows Server Family



Worldwide Fruit Limited (WFL) is an international fruit marketing and distribution company that specializes chiefly in the supply of apples, pears and avocados to major UK multiple retailers. It also handles a range of stone fruit, summer fruits and kiwifruit sourced from growers around the produce globe.

Worldwide Fruit is owned 50:50 by the UK's largest topfruit grower group, Fruition Producer Organisation, and New Zealand's largest topfruit exporter, ENZA.

As well as a network of growers in both countries and in the rest of the world's major fruit growing nations, WFL has a state-of-the-art site in Spalding, Lincolnshire, which includes 52,000 square feet of grading, packing and distribution facilities, 8,500sqft of office space, and houses more than 200 staff. It also has an office in Whitstable, Kent, that covers UK purchasing together with associated planning, distribution and logistical functions. Whitstable also manages the distribution of imported apples and pears that are handled by principal WFL pack sites in Kent. Fruition PO is also based at this office.

There were a number of considerations involved when the company decided to review its software requirements four years ago. Stuart Lane, WFL's Process Manager and Pr2 system champion across the organization, says: "We were extremely diligent when replacing our system and looked at various potential solutions over a 12-month period from July 2006, including up-and-coming systems, the established players and what was then our existing software.

"We looked at various Microsoft Dynamics vendors, but I think it was hard for the suppliers to fully understand what we were trying to achieve and we weren't prepared to take the risk of implementing modules not tested in the produce industry, particularly production and ripening."

Prophet's experience in the produce industry and desire to continually develop set them apart from their competitors, he says. "Everything in the Prophet solution was configurable – and because it was the best produce ERP system, we were able to take some of it more or less straight out of the box and tweak it to our specific requirements. The flexibility of Pr2 and the ease of upgrading, combined with their knowledge



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The software switch was part of a wider transitional phase for WFL, which changed the timetable prior to implementation. “It would be easy to look back and say the implementation process was painful, but that was more down to our situation at the time than Prophet. We were just building the new packing facility in Spalding and mutually, we decided to delay the project until that was completed. We decided to go with Pr2 in mid-2007 and eventually implemented in October 2008, having bedded down the new facility operationally,” Lane says.

When WFL did ‘go live’ – on October 5, 2008 – the process was very smooth, however. “We went virtually mod free, making a few alterations to account for third-party packer payments; and throughout the week-long process, the support was very good. We had people available from Prophet during every shift in the packhouse and in the office, and by the end of that week, everything was bedded in and manageable in-house.”

Full functionality

Once the company started to utilize the full functionality of Pr2, lot and customer profitability, along with production efficiencies, became clearer and we were able to make more informed decisions. This contributed to record profits last year in difficult trading conditions. “When Prophet was implemented, we went through a difficult period,” Lane adds, “but in the second year with the software, we posted record profits. Mark Peachey [MD of Prophet] said, that in his experience, the first year would be testing, as is always the case with IT implementations and the second year would start showing the real benefits, and he was proved right.

“We’ve changed our working methodology for the better. Our operation is more efficient at all levels. There is a huge difference between changing your working methods to fit in with the system that you’re using and using the software to enable the business to make more money, which is what Pr2 has enabled us to do.

“The finance department has access to a level of data it has not had before. Reports are now available at all times and we can see where we are, related to budget, at any stage of any day. I think Prophet has given us a vision of the future [use of software for the fresh produce industry] that our previous provider wasn’t able to deliver.

“Immediate financial visibility has revealed the true costs within our business and where real savings can be made. In terms of head count, for example, we used to have a stock and sales order processing team of 6 in Spalding and a further 3 in our Kent-based team. We now have 2 in Spalding and 2 in Whitstable, a saving that is a direct result of Pr2.”

Many companies claim the grower is at the heart of every decision

they make, but with WFL, it is undeniably true. “We are owned by growers and therefore, at the end of the day, everything is geared towards sustainable profitability,” explains Lane. “It is essential that we can give them accurate, timely information in the most cost-effective way and I think it’s fair to say that our growers have recognized the advances that have been made in the quality of information now available to them. QC Data is sent to ENZA and we use Pr2 to report standard costs by grower to Fruition.”

New dimensions

The post-production operation has also been given new dimensions. “For our partner packers the change has been significant. Under our previous ERP system, they were reliant on WFL sending them sales details and shipping notes via email. Splitting orders was cumbersome and slow. Now they can access their web interface and have the information far quicker, printing pick sheets and shipping notes and entering the shipping details down to the grower, all through using the interface,” says Lane.

“[The software] has revolutionized the information available to our technical, purchasing and sales teams. We can produce seasonal reviews and slice and dice the information as we require, all extracted from the information entered at each stage of the products’ life through WFL.

“Before Prophet, we were processing production data after each shift, making the information up to 24 hours out of date, now we scan all stock and enter all details live on each production line. The line leaders have embraced the changes extremely well, and now we have real time, location based, stock at our Spalding factory, as well as up to date efficiency reporting. I think it’s revolutionized our QC operation and we’ve demonstrated that to customers. I can’t remember the last time we made a mistake on an order – the software reduces the opportunity for error and makes the logistics much easier to co-ordinate.”

Avocados and pears are two of the main products marketed by WFL and Pr2 has helped take the QC process onto a new level for products that depend heavily on a well-monitored ripening regime. “The system works extremely well with the ripening process,” says Lane. “It allows the team to keep a constant track of all the ripening data and compare that in an instant with historical information.

“We can drill down to see penetrometer scores, for instance, which can then be fed back to the grower or onto the customer, as and when necessary. We also have the ability to produce tables and charts to make day-to-day, week-to-week and season-to-season comparisons, which are very useful.



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“This has been particularly beneficial for our avocado and pear operations, and we have picked up business with Sainsbury’s and M&S since we implemented the software.”

In practice, no part of WFL has been left untouched by the effects of the software. Lane says: “We use Pr2 throughout the business, from receipt of goods, through the production process, gathering accurate real time QC data as we go, to the shipping and invoicing of the product. We record labor usage, packaging, tray and stock movements and we will have our entire inventory control up and running within the next few weeks when we move to Prophet’s Pr2.5 and MRP system. We feel it’s time to have that bit of extra functionality and it has been driven by our customer requirements. We plan to use Pr2.5 for long-, medium- and short-term stock, tray and packaging inventory planning.”

RFID requirements

Prophet also feeds all the requisite information into the Intellident system that meets M&S’s RFID requirements. “Pr2 exports sales order data to

the Intellident RFID Portal, enabling it to produce inventory management notes, and provides the info when writing to the embedded tags,” he explains. “A team at Worldwide Fruit headed by Neal Collishaw was instrumental in developing the award-winning Pick Accuracy Verification model alongside Intellident and that’s what we use to cross check all of the information going through the Pr2 system for the M&S business.”

With Pr2 successfully integrated with the WFL business and the imminent arrival of Pr2.5 on the scene, what is Lane’s conclusion on the story to date? “Prophet has definitely enhanced our business and I think it’s fair to say we have a good working relationship,” he says. “There have been some frank discussions on both sides but always in the common interest. Their licensing structure gives us the scalability we require in what is an ever-changing marketplace. It’s not always been a bed of roses, implementations and the challenges that it brings for both parties rarely are, but if we had to do it all again, we would still choose Pr2 for the software, their expertise and the strong working relationships we have formed.”



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