

Welsh Valley foods: A case study (fictional)

The Scenario

The largest provider of pre-packaged meals to UK hospitals is Welsh Valley Foods (WVF). It produces pre-packaged frozen and chilled meals and sends them daily to UK hospitals. They have one factory and run a fleet of eight temperature-controlled delivery vans out of a valley in Wales.

The fundamental procedure is straightforward: local vendors are used to getting the food components, there are roughly 200 workers on the factory floor, and meals are cooked and prepared before being chilled or frozen and put into trucks for delivery to consumers. The meals are often prepared from frozen and provided to the hospital patient after being kept for a number of hours at the customer's location. Yum! Although it may seem straightforward, producing meals like this in large quantities at a reasonable cost necessitates complex production planning. For instance, the right amounts of potatoes, milk, beef, carrots, and peas must be converted into the necessary number of neatly packed, open-ready beef steel and mash servings.

Each client must put their daily order three weeks in advance in order to economically arrange the raw material supply and the food manufacturing line capacity. WVF computes raw material needs and production schedules using the catering planning software programme Foodwell. Their basic requirements are barely satisfied by this software suite. Customer orders, staff scheduling, and delivery logistics planning are not supported. For these, they use three intricate and challenging to-manage Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. The original software package has undergone several custom modifications during the years that WVF has utilised Foodwell, and as a result, only reluctantly is the Foodwell provider willing to support it. Moreover, there is no system in place for coordinating client relationship management, and each of the three sales managers maintains their own paper-based contact lists and agendas.

In order to shorten the three-week lead time for customer orders and order supplies, the IT team manager of WVF would want to see Foodwell replaced by a more suitable "just in time" production system that integrates customer ordering, delivery logistics, staff scheduling, and other factors. The manager, two technical staff, and two application staff make up the IT department. The two technical staff members maintain the network of 30 PCs, while the two application specialists maintain the Foodwell, Sage Payroll, Sage Accounts, and spreadsheet apps. The application specialists had been discussing purchasing Sage Act!, a low-cost (customer relationship management) CRM system, but they were unable to get the sales managers to agree with the idea.

The managing director of WVF has just told the IT manager that one of the biggest catering firms in the Country has purchased WVF, a multinational corporation with significant financial resources and ambitious strategic objectives. However, given the bleak reality, their managing director has overemphasised how advanced their information systems are. The

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new owners are eager to capitalise on WVF's expertise in milk production by opening similar factories in other parts of the UK and selling the pre-packaged meals to a wider range of customers, including schools and residential care facilities. In order to move WVF's account and payroll processes to the corporate system and create a strategy to duplicate WVF's other systems in the new factories, they are sending an informatics consultant to meet the IT manager who oversees WVF's IT-based operation.

The IT manager nervously awaits the arrival of the informatics consultant.....

YOU... are the Informatics consultant!

You've spoken with your boss numerous times (the new owners' IT director), who has brought up your issues and recommendations at the board level. Your opinion that the Foodwell system will not support the intended business goal of expansion has been made abundantly clear.

You are asked to provide a proposal for an IS strategy that:

- Replaces the payroll and accounting systems with the new owner's [SAP Enterprise resource planning \(ERP\)](#) system as quickly as possible.

- Replaces Foodwell and hopefully those spreadsheets with a more robust Materials requirement planning ([MRP](#)) software package because they want to open two new factories in Leeds and Glasgow within the next 18 months.

- Sorts out the current mess of IT infrastructure, poor management and weak attitudes to IS/IT investments.

- Support a more aggressive sales strategy with more sales staff controlled by an office-based sales administrator and a central electronic customer appointments and contract management system ([CRM](#)).

- Gives WVF a sustainable competitive advantage.

relative to the cost of building the new factories that IS/IT budget is relatively trivial so your strategy can be as bold as you like. it is however absolutely crucial that you get the systems in place to support the business strategy.

Your boss has just rung- he is on his way to meet the MD of WVF in a couple of hours and wants you to present your proposal for an IS strategy to them both, when he arrives. Now its time to start working on your proposal