



Seneca Foods Corporation

Agribusiness Leader Readies for the Future

SUMMARY

Seneca Foods Corporation is a world leader in agribusiness—the largest North American manufacturer of canned and glass-packaged vegetables, with brands that include Libby's®, Stokley® and Seneca®. Seneca needed a modern strategic IT solution to replace an aging mosaic of software systems that was increasingly costly to maintain. The new solution needed to provide a solid technology foundation, reduce risk, focus on Seneca's core competencies and support anticipated growth. Seneca turned to Clarkston Consulting for help, based on Clarkston's consumer products and life sciences industry expertise, SAP project methodology and delivery track record, and collaborative culture.

“Clarkston fielded a team that truly cared about getting the job done right and on time. Their consultants collaborated with Seneca to build and deliver a solid platform for growth.”

Carl Cichetti, CIO, Seneca Foods Corporation

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Challenge 1: *Seneca's business software systems did not provide the strategic foundation required to remain an industry leader, and their costs to maintain decades-old functionality kept increasing.*

Solution: Given its dedication to quality food and exemplary customer service, Seneca wanted a technology platform that was on par with the quality of its world-class manufacturing processes. Seneca chose SAP as the technology foundation, selecting SAP ECC 6.0 to replace the existing systems and create a single integrated IT business solution. The project, called “The Future is Now,” realigned and improved business processes based on a careful combination of best practices and Seneca customers' specific needs.

The project team held workshops to document requirements and analyze current business processes, which were evaluated and re-designed with full understanding of SAP best practices. It used SAP's full feature set to allow Seneca to automate processes (e.g., pricing administration) that had been manual in the past. Prototyping and in-depth, iterative testing cycles with actual data helped validate those processes and build users' confidence.

Challenge 2: *Seneca prides itself on excellent customer service and wanted to ensure that the new solution could accommodate its personalized approach.*

Solution: The project required that Seneca's high standards of quality for products and customer service be maintained every step of the way, while accounting for both employees' part-time involvement, and the need for absolutely no interruption or compromise to manufacturing operations during the harvesting and packing cycle. To achieve this, Seneca and Clarkston developed a project approach with two cycles, tackling the finance and purchasing operations first, then moving on to the order-to-cash, manufacturing and costing areas.

The project team reviewed Seneca's personal touches and flexibility and built these rules into the design—providing the option to do business as the customer wants, but also automating the rules and monitoring for exceptions. This meant that customer service could focus on the key exceptions and provide systematic automated service. Eliminating several manual customer service processes allowed Seneca to move from reactive mode to planning mode.

RESULTS

Seneca's investment in the SAP solution removed the technological barriers it was facing and created a stable, lasting foundation for growth. The project provided tools to better serve customers and make better decisions faster, with real-time data availability.

The project also shifted Seneca from a batch system to SAP's real-time solution. Previously, issues were uncovered days (or weeks) after the fact. SAP's system allows Seneca to review inventory situations and shortages immediately. This information is then incorporated into customer service, financial and cost transactions, enabling the company to react quickly to customers' needs and provide information the same day.

Seneca has transitioned to a technically advanced, stable information technology platform, allowing their IT personnel to transition from daily transactional support to strategic IT initiatives. This effort supports Seneca's strategic initiatives to exceed compliance needs, be customer focused, and be prepared for future growth. Specific benefits include:

- The customer and financial business cycle is faster and more automated, and the monthly, quarterly and annual fiscal close periods have decreased 60% as a result of using defined, consistent processes.
- Monitoring for compliance has been enhanced and automated with both system-enforced business rules and automated reporting and monitoring activities.

- Near real-time inventory visibility for customer and supply chain needs allows for quick response and time to adjust and respond to customer needs.
- Cost data is enhanced and many functions are automated. The necessary data is available in real-time to allow for good business decisions and allows Seneca to continue to provide the best products at the least cost to their customers.
- Consistent best practices are implemented to allow for employee cross-plant coverage and mobility within Seneca operations.

PARTNERING for SUCCESS

With Clarkston's experience and partnership, Seneca's aging, disjointed system architecture has been replaced by an integrated SAP ERP platform that will support strategic, integrated solutions; respond to customer and regulatory needs; and allow additional growth. It also establishes a single set of core business processes across all plants and distribution facilities that are scalable, efficient and based on proven industry best practices.

This transition to a technically advanced, stable information technology platform has also allowed Seneca's IT personnel to shift their focus from daily transactional support to strategic IT initiatives. This helps Seneca realize its vital goals: Exceed compliance needs, focus on the customer and be ready for future growth.



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Clarkston Consulting is a different kind of management and technology consulting firm. We deliver a unique experience for market leaders within the Consumer Products and Life Sciences industries. Considering professionalism, expertise, and value as prerequisites, we take service a step further through our unyielding commitment to the success of people as individuals, both our clients and our employees. By combining integrity, adaptability, and a whatever-it-takes attitude, we have achieved an extremely high rate of referral and repeat business and a 10-year average client satisfaction rating of 9%.

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