Leaner Process Tastes Sweet for NSWS

Sugar is big business in the northern part of New South Wales, and the New South Wales Sugar Milling Co-operative (NSWS) plays a major part in the industry. Accounting for $A230 million in regional economic output, the 100 year old organisation employs 450 people across its three mills and single refinery, as well as indirectly generating work for 500 cane farmers.

The company produces refined sugar under its 'Sunshine Sugar' brand, selling primarily to commercial customers such as food and beverage manufacturers, and re-packers. It accounts for around 25% of the Australian domestic sugar market. NSWS also sells raw sugar on to domestic and international customers, as well as producing molasses and sugar syrups.

Devolving processes to staff

NSWS wanted to streamline and automate some key processes in their business, says accountant Sandra Hansen, and initially began looking at the procurement process.

It was largely a manual process, driven by Accounts Payable clerks working at each work site, says Sandra. Staff would fill out forms requisitioning supplies and they would be inputted into their core ERP system. "There was a lot of paper involved, and multiple people based at each site – we wanted something that was accessible and easy to use."

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NSWS' core information system is a specialist enterprise resource planning (ERP) product designed for process manufacturers, called Renaissance. It is the base system the business runs on, says Sandra.

Renaissance also requires specialist training to use, so extending it to regular staff wasn't possible.

Business Issues

Need to streamline and automate core procurement and HR processes.

Solution

Customised solutions using the viisConnect platform.

Outcome

Faster, leaner processes with better communication and less staff involvement.

They had to find a web-based solution that was flexible enough to meet their needs while easy-to use for non-technical staff. They wanted non-technical staff to be able to input data directly without a need to learn the Renaissance system. Similar issues existed with NSWS' time sheeting system, with staff filling out paper forms and then clerks loading them into the core system. "We wanted to remove a step from the process," says Sandra.

A flexible new Platform

NSWS chose to work with iviis™ and their viisConnect platform to develop a solution, initially for their procurement process. "iviis™ developed a web-based system that integrated with Renaissance, enabling people to enter and then monitor the process," says Sandra.

ViisConnect manages authorisation levels for purchasing, and the workflow associated with ordering new supplies, says Sandra. This includes automated emails to ensure people complete the process correctly and on time.

Once the procurement solution was bedded in, NSWS turned their attention to streamlining the time sheeting process. "We were already using it for AP so were familiar and comfortable with it," says Sandra.

"Working with iviis™ we were able to design it from scratch, they used our processes and ideas. We have a relatively complicated structure, such as 24x7 shifts in the refinery operation, so it had to cope with that."

NSWS now has a completely electronic time sheeting system, which uploads data into their payroll system or can be extracted into other tools for analysis. "iviis™ also built in validation points to ensure people were entering correct data such as the right cost centre, in the past you couldn't pick this up until the data entry point," says Sandra.

The procurement solution has been running almost three years, says Sandra, and the benefits have been significant. "ViisConnect offers accessibility from anywhere and is easier for people to train and use."

Visibility to the requisitions has also been a benefit, but the real gain has been streamlining the process. "There is much less paperwork involved, much less data entry, and we were able to consolidate our accounts payable team to one site, instead of having people at each site."

The flexibility of working with the viisConnect platform was crucial for the time sheeting project, says Sandra. "We built it from ground up and viisConnect gave us a lot of flexibility to do what we needed – there wasn't anything it couldn't do, but it was still cost effective."

A more efficient process is the result. "It has really saved time and effort, managers and staff don't have to chase time sheets, and we don't need people on site to process them."

Sandra says having it hosted offsite by iviis™ gives NSWS peace of mind, and iviis™' support during and after the process has been excellent. "It has been very reliable and we have had no problems, we are very happy with it."

iviis™ provide software solutions that help organisations know their business, now. For the manufacturing sector, the iviis™ supply chain management solution enables them to collaborate more effectively across their supply chain, helping increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve customer outcomes.

To arrange a consultation with one of our experts, visit www.iviis.com

Case Study