

PositiveVision Cooks Up Efficiency At Bernard Foods

Success Story

Based in Evanston, Illinois, Bernard Foods has been providing award winning food products for both foodservice and retail trade since 1947. They manufacture hundreds of specialty products developed for schools, camps, hospitals, cruise ships and many more facilities. The company is the largest family owned and operated food manufacturer in the United States. Bernard Foods operates three separate lines of business including, institutional, consumer and online, all of which share centralized administration and accounting functions.

A Recipe for Disaster

October, 1999 brought a similar Y2K challenge for many companies. However, the challenge was particularly unique for Bill Sliwa, CFO at Bernard Foods. "I was hired in October and soon realized that I had just three months to achieve Y2K compliance," said Bill. "On top of that I needed to straighten up our books and close our year-end to get our house in order from a recent financial misappropriation."

To complicate matters, the accounting systems used at Bernard Foods brought their own complications. Data wasn't easily retrieved and Bernard Foods really struggled to get the information needed to provide accurate, timely reporting. "This was one of our bigger problems," said Bill. "I couldn't get the numbers I needed to close the books."

Bernard Foods also had a complicated commission structure as every employee

had a separate plan. Selling one or two units placed salespeople in one commission range while selling three or four placed them in another. Commission calculations were also margin and gross sales based. These rules, and associated payments, were managed by one person and the rules were all in her head causing more confusion.

Cooking Up A New Solution

Based on a recommendation from a trusted colleague, PositiveVision was approached to help ready Bernard Foods for the Y2K transition and to take control of financial reporting. "I met with Bob Baran at PositiveVision and I knew right away that they were the company for us. From

the beginning I could tell that he understood my needs and would work well with our team. It was a pretty solid fit."

"Given that we too are a small business, we are very aware of the significance of cash flow to a business," said Bob. "We recognize the difference between wants and needs. Although we may want a specific 'bell or whistle', it's not always necessary. We appreciate the impact these purchases can have on the bottom line and we apply that same perspective when recommending solutions for our clients."

While it was clear Bernard Foods would benefit from new financial systems, the first goal was to stabilize the environment and prepare for the Y2K transition. With that project complete, PositiveVision began working with Bernard Foods to help them

Challenge:

With only three months before Y2K shut down existing financial systems, Bernard Foods struggled to reorganize from a recent financial misappropriation. In addition, they wrestled with outdated systems that were wrought with inefficiency and which significantly restricted how they did business.

Solution:

PositiveVision took the reigns, and readied Bernard Foods for Y2K. Shortly thereafter, PositiveVision guided them through a systems upgrade that was both transforming for their business and cost-effective for their budget.

Results:

PositiveVision implemented a fully-integrated system that delivered improvements across the company. Bernard Foods was so pleased with the outcome that they turned over all Information Technology functions to PositiveVision who ensures Bernard Foods has the tools they need to grow their business.



“Bob and the team at PositiveVision have put our company on the right track and they’ve given us peace of mind.”

About PositiveVision

PositiveVision is one of the leading providers of business software for process manufacturing and distribution businesses in the greater Chicago area. Our expertise lies in streamlining systems, production and processes to maximize your technology. We offer expert advice, project management, training, and technical support so that your business objectives can be met in the most effective manner possible.

PositiveVision’s consultative approach recognizes that each organization is unique. The team at PositiveVision is well trained and experienced in learning each clients business to provide a tailored solution. We value honesty and integrity above all else, and at all times operate with your business objectives in sight.



Authorized Partner

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solve some of the larger issues they faced – ones that would make them more efficient and help them better manage their business.

PositiveVision recommended Sage PFW, a comprehensive financial, distribution, and process manufacturing solution for small to mid-sized businesses. Sage PFW would provide the framework Bernard Foods needed to begin building a more effective financial infrastructure.

The Proof is in the Pudding

Sage PFW had an immediate impact as Bernard Foods’ three lines of business were consolidated into one platform. This effort allowed Bernard Foods to manage all businesses using one order entry system and one pool of inventory – something that wasn’t possible under the old system.

Despite the consolidation, Bernard Foods was still able to manage three businesses as distinct entities within one master system. “The first objective was to integrate the new solution with their legacy system,” said Bob, “By doing this we were able to provide them with the complete integration they needed to fully maximize their investment.”

Reporting and invoicing were moved to a laser printer instead of dot matrix which saved significant amounts of time and paper, provided more flexibility around invoice generation. Bills of Lading and Shipping Labels were automated enabling the shipping department to generate these themselves in addition to providing visibility throughout the company. New inventory pop-up notes, integrated with order entry made life easier as they allowed users to see alerts and notes for

specific inventory items. “An employee in inventory control may decide the company will no longer produce a given item, yet they may still have six cases of inventory on hand,” offered Bob. “Pop-up notes allow those in order entry to know that once existing inventory is gone, they don’t want to sell anymore.”

“I’m the systems biggest fan in the company,” said Bill. “I don’t have time to manage the process, so I’m glad that Sage PFW does it for us. Things work the way they are supposed to and the reports I receive are accurate and dependable.”

“Bill’s biggest challenge is that Sage PFW gives him too much information which is a good problem to have,” said Bob. “We do our best to help him rein it in and present it in a way that empowers Bill to better manage the business.”

Along with implementing one integrated solution, came the natural benefit of both vendor and cost consolidation. Rather than paying more significant maintenance fees for several disparate systems, Bernard Foods was now dealing with only one vendor which meant a reduction in ongoing maintenance costs.

“We couldn’t be any happier with our relationship with PositiveVision,” bragged Bill. “Since the initial project began, we’ve given them responsibility for managing our entire IT infrastructure. We can trust that no matter what’s going on in our system, PositiveVision will take care of it. Bob and the team at PositiveVision have taken care of our needs, put the company on the right track and they’ve given us peace of mind.”

