Blue Bell Creameries

RFgen

OVERVIEW

Top U.S. ice cream manufacturer creates supply chain visibility, improve inventory efficiency and ingredient traceability with RFgen Mobile Foundations for Oracle E-Business.

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SNAPSHOT

INDUSTRY:
Food & Beverage,
Manufacturing

ENVIRONMENT:
Oracle E-Business Suite
Release 12

APPLICATIONS:
- Inventory Management
- Process Manufacturing
- Receiving

GOALS ACHIEVED

1. Smoothly transitioned from Oracle 11i to 12 without losing functionality or interrupting data collection capabilities.

2. Created efficient track and trace process for food products to comply with federal food safety regulations.

3. Eliminated data loss from "drops"—when handheld device connectivity was unexpectedly interrupted.

4. Digitized fixed asset tracking for 800+ truck drivers operating across thousands of locations.

> " The RFgen system is quicker and much more customizable. It enables us to be very effective, efficient and flexible. "
>
> - Jim Kruse,
>   Board Secretary and Controller
>   Blue Bell Creameries

THE CHALLENGE

Blue Bell had been using Oracle E-Business Suite 11i environment for their existing automated data collection solution. Realizing that this version was difficult to modify and did not support off-line or batch modes, the company decided to upgrade to Release 12 to overcome these issues and improve overall functionality. But during the transition, the Blue Bell team discovered that Release 12 also created unexpected challenges, such as the fact that it now combined discrete and process manufacturing functions.

Blue Bell not only set out to correct this inefficiency, but viewed the upgrade as an opportunity to enhance their operational capabilities by bringing in a long-term solution that was easy to learn and use and could be implemented quickly. The solution would also have to be robust and flexible, capable of bridging related gaps in their current operations with the ability to be customized to meet evolving needs down the road.

THE SOLUTION

Led by board secretary and controller Jim Kruse, the management team at Blue Bell began looking for a replacement for their existing automated data collection solution that would address the challenges associated with their ERP upgrade, multiple operating systems, delivery logistics, and solution scalability.

After evaluating several potential alternatives, Blue Bell selected to customize RFgen Mobile Foundations for Oracle E-Business Suite—a powerful, flexible and cost-efficient solution for the challenges they faced. The specially-tailored RFgen suite would enhance operations by implementing Advanced Data Collection (ADC) in Receiving, Inventory, Manufacturing, Quality and Fixed Assets. RFgen now ran on all of Blue Bell's operating systems for both PC and mobile field devices.

THE RESULT

Not only had RFgen helped Blue Bell Creameries make a smooth transition to Oracle E-Business Suite Release 12 without losing functionality or data collection capabilities, the company remained highly satisfied with RFgen's reliability and performance. RFgen proved to be the right solution for Blue Bell's challenges, offering continued scalability and seamless integration across multiple operating systems.

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Blue Bell employees now used RFgen to receive ingredient inputs from vendors on the load docks using handheld barcode scanners that quickly scan information from purchase orders. On the inventory and production side of the house, the scanners were being used to do cycle counts, keep accurate inventory in real time and track inputs going into product batches.

"RFgen handles our inputs, outputs, returns and also some quality control transactions on the handheld," stated Kruse. "All of the lots going into this system are tied together with quality information as well as receiving adjustments of inventory, inputs into batches, returns back to inventory and outputs that are basically a WIP completion or a finished intermediate item such as a mix, chocolate, or cookie." He went on to add: "There's no way we could collect so much data without the RFgen system."

RFgen solved one of Blue Bell's most frustrating issues with their previous vendor: data drops. The prior solution had a bad habit of dropping its connection with handheld devices. "The inventory guys would then have to go and find the pallets that they had already stored in the racks," recalled Clint Eilers, a Cost Control Analyst at Blue Bell. Warehouse employees then had to re-scan all the items on the pallets and hope the connection wasn't dropped a second time.

RFgen implemented a mobile fixed asset solution to address one of Blue Bell's complex logistical delivery challenges, enabling the company Bell to upgrade to a digital paperless process. This solution also helped the customer's unique delivery system of over 800 truck drivers manage Blue Bell fixed assets located at thousands of branch and customer sites with drastically greater efficiency and accuracy. Drivers no longer performed manual calculations or modifications to paper-based forms, minimizing time delays from miscounts and human error.

ABOUT BLUE BELL

Blue Bell Creameries has been making delectable ice cream and frozen snack products since 1907. Now the company operates four manufacturing plants, 57 distribution centers, and a large fleet of delivery trucks. Known for its unique mixtures, Blue Bell ranks as one of the top three best-selling branded ice creams in the U.S.—despite being only available in 26-percent of the nation's supermarkets.