Customer Profile

Grimmway Farms grows more efficient processes with Infor EAM

Facts at a glance

Solution: ERP
Product: Infor EAM
Industry: Food and beverage
Country: USA

"Now we can run end-of-month reports, reducing preparation time from 1 day to about 30 minutes."

—Katie Diesl, EAM Development Manager, Grimmway Farms

About the company

Grimmway Farms produces conventional and organic fruits and vegetables. Founded in 1971 and based in Arvin, California, Grimmway Farms began when brothers Rod and Bob Grimm set up a roadside produce stand. Today, the company is a top supplier of baby carrots, boosting its sales by marketing it as a healthful snack and creating easy packaging for kids' sack lunches and airline service. To learn more, visit www.grimmway.com/.

Setting the strategy

As Grimmway Farms evolved from a small company growing full-size carrots to being a top producer of baby carrots and more than 60 different commodities of produce, the company decided that it needed a robust, flexible asset management system to effectively maintain its seven facilities: carrot processing plants, a juice plant, a frozen food facility, citrus packing shed, and multiple vegetable packing sheds.

Several years ago the company implemented a computerized maintenance management system (CMMS), Infor™ MP2 Express. Katie Diesl, enterprise asset management (EAM) development manager at Grimmway, explains: "Our maintenance department adopted its own solution, but a few years ago we started shopping for an integrated CMMS to be used companywide. A few departments had been using their own different versions of Infor M2 Express, all with different databases, and they independently maintained them. As time passed, we started to have issues with these differences, such as unstable data, insufficient reporting options, and lack of flexibility in the data structure to trace historical data. Although Infor MP2 Express met our needs for many years, we reached a point where we needed more."

Getting business specific

After investigating Infor EAM as an upgrade to Infor MP2 Express, Grimmway was convinced that it met the company's needs. "Its features were most compelling," says Diesl. "It had extensive built-in data validation to improve our data integrity, and with its fully integrated modules, we could trace all historical information. Also, its custom reporting options eliminated much of the need for us to manually manipulate reports."

Seeing results

As the company began reviewing the Infor MP2 Express data to migrate to Infor EAM, a data cleanup campaign began. “Infor EAM has an Infor MP2 Express migration module,” Diesl notes. “But we weren’t current on maintenance, so we followed others’ advice and just extracted the data from Infor MP2 Express—our assets, parts, inventory, and preventive maintenance (PM) structure. To move forward with a clean database, we validated the information as current and corrected some past sins. Then we simply used the Upload utility tool to import into Infor EAM.” The company left EAM Express running to give the groups access to the old data. “But once we moved forward,” says Diesl, “they didn’t miss it.”

Diesl points out Infor EAM benefits. “Because all modules are fully integrated, we can easily navigate and trace data from any point within the program and see the entire work order history. And because Infor EAM is a web-based system, we find it much easier to disseminate the program to people. Users find it more stable; they can jump onto any computer in our network, or even use our VPN environment if they’re not on the internal network. So, it’s allowed greater use of the program.”

Infor EAM's custom reporting option also adds important value for Grimmway. Diesl says, “Some users once spent a day or two a month slicing and dicing the data in Infor MP2 to prepare it for management. Now we can run custom end-of-month reports, reducing preparation time from 1 day to about 30 minutes. We have much more flexibility in how we can customize reports to cater to different users’ needs.”

Some initial user resistance arose during the transition from Infor MP2 Express to Infor EAM. “Infor EAM requires more detailed and standardized data entry, and that’s what the company needed,” Diesl declares. “In time, everyone saw the value because now they have much richer historical data. And we used Infor EAM to personalize the screens for users in all departments to make them look more like Infor MP2.”

Diesl claims that one critical EAM feature has contributed to Grimmway’s success and transition into the future. “User-defined fields have been key in shifting people to Infor EAM from a custom program that they built in their legacy databases. During data cleansing in Infor MP2 Express, we found a comments field with five unique pieces of information because there was nowhere else to put it. With user-defined fields, we could place key information in its proper place and make them specific to each group, calling it what they wanted. These fields are even more powerful because users can put their own validation on them. And Screen Designer enhances that by letting us set default values and calling a field exactly what each person is used to seeing. I can’t emphasize enough how important this feature is, and it aligns with the independent mentality in our organization.”

According to Diesl, Flex SQL is another powerful feature for Grimmway. “We use it to automate and speed up processes and customize to suit our organization. But we’ve also streamlined invoice processing with Flex. From just the purchase order screen, users can create an order, receive it, and automatically create a complete invoice voucher. With Flex SQL code and a custom status, the system populates all the invoice tables and eliminates the need to go to multiple screens. The users love it.”

Another Infor EAM capability that has helped the company meet its specific needs is Infor’s alert management capability, Diesl explains: “Alert Management, like Flex SQL, triggers you when events occur, but Alert Management is more dynamic and is the backbone of integration with programmable logic controllers (PLCs) and predictive maintenance. If we need some event to happen when another set of conditions occurs, Alert Management is very powerful.”

The company continues to look for new ways to use Infor EAM for added advantage. “We currently have 10,000 assets, 273 active users set up in Infor EAM, and 7 different facilities sharing the same database, with screens configured just for their needs,” says Diesl. “We track our finished products’ packaging materials and usage in Infor EAM as well as the seed inventory for our farming operations. And the latest departments to explore Infor EAM are safety and refrigeration.

They've started tracking their change procedures and safety management program in Infor EAM. We created a personalized dashboard for them as well as another for engineering so that they can monitor the status of their work orders. We made them look similar to the forms they once used, and then we gave them a report that eliminated much manual writing and tracking. The report shows approval history and displays each status change, who signed off on it and when—which is very useful during audits."

"Infor EAM is like Infor MP2 Express on steroids," Diesl exclaims. "Infor MP2 Express is straightforward for tracking our work orders and our PMs. Infor EAM is a much more dynamic, powerful, and flexible asset management system, and it's made a big difference in helping us grow."

Infor EAM has helped Grimmway Farms to:

- Trust the data, thanks to a strong data validation process.
- Cut report analysis time from 1 day to about 30 minutes.
- Streamline and automate maintenance and operations processes.
- Accelerate user adoption and productivity by easily configuring screens and reports for each department.
- Develop a true predictive maintenance program with condition monitoring and alerts.

Doing business better

Grimmway continues to see Infor as a valuable partner in its future. "I can say confidently that Infor EAM was the right choice for us," says Diesl, "and we've expanded our relationship with Infor because Infor EAM has made us very productive. We'll look to Infor as we search for ways to solve new business issues."

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