

Manitoba Starch Products

Looking to bring their business into the future, Epicor ERP and Six S Partners helped them do it.

Challenges

Manitoba Starch (MS) found themselves with many systems requiring a lot of manual maintenance. As a food ingredient process manufacturer, product quality records are very important to maintain their trusted status as a supplier in their markets. To complicate this MS serves a number of markets that require a number of product quality tests and certifications including:

- Certified food safety program (HACCP) in accordance with the BRCGS / Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Standard,
- Allergen/gluten free facility and certification in accordance with the Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) and Gluten Free Certification Program (GFCP),
- Safe Foods for Canadians Act license, etc.

This profile tells the story of how they were able to solve their operational challenges as a food industry supplier and remain lean while advancing and growing the business.

MS is a supplier of food ingredients that are found in snack foods, baked goods and health supplements for human and animal consumption. Their business is to acquire, refine and deliver ingredients and in some cases finished products that are sold through multiple channels including bulk and retail ready packaging.

Finding themselves with the opportunity for growth and expansion into new markets was about to increase their operational complexity. Their existing systems were based on QuickBooks, process control software, excel, word documents and SharePoint for record keeping. Transactions were recorded manually and were fundamentally free-form text. While complaint they realized that they were spending a large amount of time in record keeping which was underscored by the time it took to be audited. In order to grow, better record keeping was required by their customers and the certification standards and auditors under which they had to manage their operations.

The opportunity for growth presented a bigger challenge than just investing in new equipment and supplying new markets. They knew they could not grow with their current systems foundations.



“Back in the day, everything was manual, we had separate systems for operating, shipping, accounting, everything was stand alone. There were lots of opportunities for human error.”

Brent McMillan

In a response to this they engaged their financial audit firm to help them undergo a system analysis and search for an ERP platform that would help them become more efficient, in control and grow more profitably and at the same time improve their ability to be complaint to the quality standards of the food markets they served.

MS had many systems that were not integrated from finance, inventory, shipping, quality as well as maintenance management, and we were exposed and vulnerable to human error.

Some of the observations of their situation uncovered that their information was not integrated, workflows were disjointed and required re-keying of common information, finance was not integrated into operations and quality and equipment maintenance were stand alone. Their audits were primarily paper based and a dreaded 3 days of all hands to support the requirements of searching for the information needed.



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For over 15 years, MS has been Canada's industry experts in manufacturing starch-based potato products, working with human health, animal health and food ingredient industry leaders.

In their state-of-the-art facility MS maintains the following:

- Certified food safety program (HACCP) in accordance with the BRCGS / Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) Standard
- Allergen/gluten free facility and certification in accordance with the Canadian Celiac Association (CCA) and Gluten Free Certification Program (GFCP)
- Safe Foods for Canadians Act license
- Non-GMO Project Verified program certification
- Kashruth Council of Canada Kosher certification

Increased Efficiency

Through the guided selection for an ERP MS lined up a number of competitive products based on functional fit using a RFP process. Once MS limited the products for fit and function, MS short listed the products of interest which included Epicor ERP as presented by Six S Partners the services firm. Each vendor was required to perform detailed demonstrations that were scripted to ensure MS would solve the operational challenges and goals to improve the visibility and workflows between departments.

After a detailed evaluation and scoring of the solutions, MS decided upon Epicor ERP as it had the traceability, workflow flexibility and a full stack of capability from one software vendor. Epicor would enable them to grow the business, integrate operations and finance, quality and production control and maintenance management.

As a food process manufacturer who wanted to scale without increasing overheads and adding people to manage the systems, Epicor was the right product fit and the experienced team at Six S Partners was the right partner to help them achieve their vision through the training and implementation of the system and the best practices that MS wished to adopt for greater standardization and compliance.



Big factors for MS's decision were found in the fundamental business processes and the ease in which they were able to transition their manual paper centric approaches to the more integrated and streamlined capability that Epicor enabled. For example:

- Incoming inspection of raw materials required testing that attached the results to the lot specific materials that were inventoried for processing. Epicor attached the details in a manner that was efficient and compliant to their food standard processing needs.
- Production reporting required 20 material quality variables that were needed to be tested for which did not include the additional environmental plant and equipment testing to support FDA and other like certifications.
- Integrating production with sales, finance, shipping and supply chain meant that costing was automatic and real-time as was the visibility of how well they are meeting customer order demands.
- Maintenance jobs were integrated into their production planning and were performed during the day to ensure MS could deliver and balance of the processes MS required to remain compliant. In the past maintenance had to be performed outside of the day as scheduling was not integrated or visible to the departmental stakeholders.
- Digitizing records into the Epicor Kinetic ERP relational database meant that MS could drill down and follow the details of any transaction and quickly retrieve any source documents that are needed to manage the day to day compliance of their industry specific quality standards. This has had a big efficiency impact.
- In the past their manual systems allowed them to do things out of sequence. With Epicor it forces some processes that need to follow a sequence and ensures that all the information is managed to ensure nothing is missed. Critical information for DUNS, FDA etc. are supported.



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“When you're talking about reduced paperwork and improved timelines, we have a mock recall every year. Within an hour of a customer filing a complaint we know which raw product went into the lot that we sold to that customer, regardless of where they are in the world.”

Outcomes

The biggest *ah ha* moment for MS was that the project exposed how poor their records were. While loading data they took the time to improve the quality and accuracy of the information to avoid the age old “garbage in, garbage out” for their new Epicor ERP system.

MS feedback from Implementing Epicor Kinetic ERP with Six S Partners, “Six S took the time to learn more about their business. The team at Six S immediately started a deeper analysis of their business,” offered Brent McMillan.

The value of the ERP was realized through operational efficiency and they believe they saved the equivalent of one person from an headcount perspective. As a growing company they were able to put that newfound capacity to work in other areas to expand their operations and product lines for new markets.

The efficiency of accessing data is a daily payback for MS as they are constantly required to supply the test results of their products as part of their product deliveries. This information access and visibility became particularly valuable when they increased their audit requirements due to the new markets they entered. The audit requirements grew extensively, and the time required was decreased from their previous time of 3 full days down to 2 days and a lot less stress.

Today MS holds the distinguished position as a BRC certified supplier and has held the highest rating five years in a row. As an insight to what that means, they are required to demonstrate in control and complaint processes, the data and traceability through an audit that includes a mock recall. Not only has MS passed this requirement they have been successful in passing multiple surprise audits. The British Retail Consortium Global Standards (BRCGS) Food Safety standard provides a framework for food manufacturers to achieve the highest levels of safety, covering a wide range of areas including HACCP, tra-

ceability and quality management systems and setting the global benchmarks for close to 25 years.

Thankfully MS has never had to perform a recall, as monitoring and managing the results of their in process testing helps them ensure a quality product every time. The recall process involves the detailed determination of the origins of their raw materials and tracing them to the specific destinations of their customers and assisting them to also identify any out of specification products for safety and compliance. Should a recall be required their audited testing of their Epicor ERP recall process has given them the confidence that they can achieve this objective in minutes.

The Epicor quality tools have helped the company remain within standards for their products and quality process standards which helped reduce the burden of audits and certifications. Making quality a part of operational and production transactions has helped simplify and streamline while reducing the redundant re-keying of information. Epicor’s use of master data and detailed transactional data has proven to improve the daily transactions for the staff from the previous document shuffle and filing that was required prior to the ERP implementation.

More recently moving to Kinetic in the cloud has been seamless for them. They now know that they have limited their liability and increased their security as a result of the Epicor cloud. The pilot and training test database capability has proven to be a valuable step in reviewing processes and the while training on new functionality. They continue to use this feature and capability in the cloud.

Regular upgrades, now happen at a more frequent cadence and pace. With the exception of some minor technical aspects, They have not experienced any validation concerns related to ensuring that the new released do not adversely affect their products quality or the processes that they have certified under.

Revisiting the End user procedures over time has proven to be valuable to ensure that they are in tune with what is really happening which is at the heart of their compliance and validation of their Good Manufacturing Processes (FDA - GMP).



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Takeaways

While they have Epicor support MS feels the support from Six S Partners can be accomplished very quickly and effectively to discuss at deeper level how they can take advantage of features and functions.

Most of MS' advancement in the last five years and the majority of the requests have been finance related and helping to understand how these impact their outcomes.

MS is now, and continues to be ready to adopt and take advantage of new opportunities and markets through the controls and agility that the Epicor Kinetic ERP has enabled.

“Regardless of the knowledge base of your company, I recommend a team approach to the implementation. It is human nature that people do not like change. The best way to overcome this is through strong proactive communications and updates of where the company is taking their business and operating model. Valuable information comes directly from the team and their insights. Adoption and education for new employees now is very straightforward.”



About Epicor

With 40 years of experience, Epicor Software Corporation is a global leader in business software solutions. Serving the retail, manufacturing, distribution, and service industries, Epicor's client base comprises 20,000 customers across 150 countries. For more information, visit epicor.com

About Six S Partners

With strategic locations across the US and Canada, Six S Partners is a full-service ERP training and consulting firm with a specific expertise in Epicor. As a Certified, Epicor Platinum Partner, they possess a deep knowledge of Epicor's solutions and are skilled in successful ERP implementations. Providing solutions to mid-size manufacturing, distribution, and service organizations, Six S Partners is thoroughly invested in the long-term success of its implementation clients.

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