



CASE STUDY

OWS FOODS

OWS Foods provides high-quality ingredients to food manufacturers and restaurants alike. With emphasis on BBQ rubs and seasonings, custom food service blends, and private label blends, OWS Foods is a well-rounded one-stop shop for their partners.

Industry:
Food & Beverage

Location:
Overland Park, KS

Results



Dramatically improved
traceability



Increased total
production efficiency



Improved ability
to meet customer demand



A Legacy of Quality

Back in the 1970s, when John Jungk began blending spices for Pizza Hut in the basement of his Kansas City home, his passion was sparked for a business that would eventually establish a legacy. OWS now has three generations working to blend and package custom spices with twenty-four-hour production. With a broad customer base, OWS Foods provides everything from customized taste solutions to packaging and product development. They also own and distribute several nationally known brands including BBQ Spot, Head Country, and Twist'd Q seasonings, among others.

When founded, OWS Foods only produced dry blended spices. However, through both internal product development and acquisition, OWS Foods expanded to new products and markets. With this growth, OWS Foods recognized a need to implement a comprehensive digitized solution to help increase production efficiency and provide better control and predictability while maintaining their high quality standards.

Investing in Scalability

OWS Foods is no stranger to the dry manufacturing process. It uses a split by batch operation with non-fixed sizes, so that operators can include variation based on the product they are pulling. However, wet manufacturing uses fixed batch sizes and ingredients are crushed and mixed into a slurry as opposed to a dry powder. This allows the operation and product to be scaled effectively based on demand.

With product expansion bringing new wet manufacturing facilities online, different raw materials supply chains and new machines were required. These operational challenges along with overall business growth prompted OWS Foods to search for a unified system to implement across their facilities. Their search led them to the enterprise-wide deployment of cloud-based Plex.



Plex has done a really great job of bringing every aspect of our business into a holistic view...that scalable structure gives us the ability to bolt on additional manufacturing facilities as we grow.”

Christopher Marks
ERP Manager

OWS Foods utilizes Plex’s Manufacturing Execution System (MES) with emphasis on quality control capabilities to manage lot tracking, batch management, and production planning companywide to enhance the business. The digitized solution tracks in-process quality and reduces waste resulting from manual errors and problems caught after the fact, along with ensuring alignment with industry standards and guidelines.

“Plex has done a really great job of bringing every aspect of our business into a holistic view, from accounting to raw materials to quality to SPC checksheets to EDI,” said Christopher Marks, ERP Manager at OWS Foods, “That scalable structure gives us the ability to bolt on additional manufacturing facilities as we grow.”

On the shop floor, Plex allows operators to make educated decisions based on what the system is telling them. The comprehensive, real-time view of production in Plex has broken down the silos across facilities and is now the single source of truth for reliable data. Batch management has enabled more flexible scheduling of production and has increased focus on optimization, making OWS Foods much more efficient. Marks stated, “The more that we can schedule through Plex, the more effectively we can run the lines and meet our customer demand.”

Growth through Acquisition

In 2021, OWS Foods acquired Head Country Barbeque, an award-winning, nationally acclaimed Oklahoma-based barbeque brand and sauce manufacturer and a Midwest regional favorite for nearly 75 years. Implementing Plex MES into their new wet manufacturing facility was a priority to increase their total production efficiency through organizational connectedness and alignment across their cloud SaaS environment while continuing to provide unmatched customer service and authentic tastes to the market.

OWS Foods also deployed Plex DemandCaster Supply Chain Planning into their facilities. Plex's supply chain planning solution allows companies to effectively manage and plan for cross-facility inventory procurement. This was a critical part for the success of OWS Foods as they navigated the pandemic's impact on food supply chains and continued to adjust to the acquisition of Head Country Barbeque. Mature planning and forecasting capabilities have helped differentiate their business and accelerate growth, as reduced inventory equals lower costs and higher service levels for customers.



With an easy user interface aiding in adoption, Plex gave OWS Foods an in-depth view across their existing and new facilities. Their focus on both technical and organizational change management ensured employees at Head Country Barbeque felt fully integrated into the OWS Foods enterprise and culture, reaping the productivity benefits of Plex quickly.

“The biggest benefit to deploying Plex was being operational with high user engagement within 4-5 months of implementation,” said Marks. “The production reporting capabilities, as well as total lot traceability using the lot management system, have also greatly improved production and safety.”

Now that OWS Foods has laid the foundation with a smart manufacturing solution, they can confidently grow the company with Plex in their corner. Using a suite of Plex solutions including ERP, MES and DemandCaster, OWS Foods is better prepared to scale quickly for continued success in their future endeavors.

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ABOUT PLEX

Plex, by Rockwell Automation, is a leader in cloud-delivered smart manufacturing solutions, empowering the world's manufacturers to make awesome products. Our platform gives manufacturers the ability to connect, automate, track, and analyze every aspect of their business to drive transformation. The Plex Smart Manufacturing Platform™ includes solutions for manufacturing execution (MES),

ERP, quality, supply chain planning and management, asset performance management, production monitoring, process automation and analytics to connect people, systems, machines and supply chains, enabling them to lead with precision, efficiency and agility. To learn more, visit www.plex.com