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## **THE KEY TO ERP IMPLEMENTATION:** **Matching system functionality with the right vendor**

“The key is that your partner needs to understand how to get the knowledge from you and your business and tie it to the functionality within the software. You’re technology partner has to understand what you do and how you do it. Then they have to have enough leadership to say, ‘OK, here’s the best way to do this.’”

*- Duncan Renyard, Director of Information Technology, NATC.*

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Upgrading or replacing your current business software solution can seem like a daunting task. Too often, the initiative gets pushed to the back burner drawing out the entire process. But it certainly doesn't have to be this way.

When it comes to choosing an ERP partner, industry fit is as much of a factor as what the software can actually do. The fact is that there are vendors out there who offer ERP solutions that claim they are “the best” or “the most cost-effective.” Although that may be the case, if the vendor can't implement the system properly it just won't work for your company.

That was the problem faced by North America Tea & Coffee Inc. (NATC), a manufacturer and distributor of private label and branded grocery products.

### **A mediocre start to working with Microsoft Dynamics NAV. Right product but wrong partner**

After investigating various systems, NATC selected NAV from Microsoft Dynamics choosing an amongst a number of implementation partner options. However, after two years, the system still wasn't fully implemented.

“Pretty much everything other than finance and production wasn't working,” said Duncan Renyard, Director of Information Technology, NATC. “Inventory Management wasn't fully implemented, neither were other key areas such as preventative maintenance, quality management, research and development, and sales. The system that the original NAV partner put in place to implement didn't help the areas in our company where people were not computer experts. The training for our people was only a day or two long. They went through canned training scripts. Then when they got to the hard questions, they just said ‘yes’ to everything.”

With 25 years in IT, Renyard has implemented enough systems to understand that the key piece to implementing a system is that the vendor knows its software and also knows how the customer's business operates.

NATC has some special requirements. For example they needed a system that enabled it to combine shipments of different products for the same customer.

“Although it is a little more complicated, any system should be able to handle from a manufacturing perspective and distribution, different types of products, different processes,” Renyard said.

And that raised another issue, which is the lot traceability of food.

“So if we have the raw material that a supplier tells us is contaminated, we need to trace it through to the finished goods,” he said. “You may have sugar that has a contaminant in it—it might not be a health issue, but it could be a quality issue.”

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We would have to trace it to the finished good products we put that lot of sugar into. We have to find out who we sold it to, if they still have any on the shelf, if they can pull it and send it back to us so we can replace it. In the case of a recall you're graded based on how quickly you can recall products. We are talking minutes and hours, not days and weeks."

Although the vendor said its system did lot tracing, it could not do it within a reasonable amount of time.

"The product would get to the consumer before you would find the information in the system," Renyard said.

In order to do lot tracing, the vendor needed to implement another module, which it initially said it would do.

"But there was no desire from that company to follow up and be sure the module got implemented," Renyard said. "Effectively they were looking for more money, which was the real catalyst for looking for another partner. So during that process we realized we were on our own."

### **ERP Implementation Take Two – working with JustFoodERP.**

"Their approach was that they offered to come in to review our business and they went through what their implementation process was," he said. "It wasn't strictly how the software could work but it was bringing people to the table who were experts within the various areas of our business."

The JustFoodERP sales team talked to us about how we could best use the system so we could save time and money and operate more efficiently.

"Although you define some of the big issues up front, you always miss some," Renyard said. "But in the training process they went through and helped us to design the process to use the software. They were not shy about challenging you on how you do your business. If you didn't have an answer, the team would say it's time to ask the question higher up. It's the best practice on how you do that particular function. You didn't have to go and learn every part of the software. They were much more cognizant of the fact that you didn't have superstars in every department. And they came back and did retraining until each department got it. They didn't give up and say, 'You're on your own now.'"

When JustFoodERP took over the implementation, NATC went through each module and re-implemented each of them with JustFoodERP.

"Effectively they both sell the same product—they were both Microsoft resellers. We bought the license originally from the first company; we bought some additional modules from JustFoodERP. We were using the same system. But

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JustFoodERP went through to the end as a double check even if it worked really well. They understood the processes,” Renyard said.

“Because the modules are so interlinked, it was important to see how one module is configured as they all affect each other,” he said. “We were able to highlight the pain points before they started. As we worked through the system, we were fixing the pain points. They were actually going through the process that you went through to perform the function. They found additional areas that we were weak in—areas we forgot about because they weren’t as painful as the system that was implemented by the first provider.”

Because JustFoodERP runs its business well, NATC is perpetually going back and looking in the system for features that it hasn’t turned on and effectively activating them.

“When we turn them on, we call the JustFoodERP support line and they help us go through it,” Renyard said. It’s an ongoing support process, all part of our annual enhancement fees.”

And if NATC has a problem, JustFoodERP will work through the issue, find out what the problem is, and even highlight the code so Microsoft can easily fix it because it’s been documented.

“They are almost always able to find that flaw,” Renyard said. “Anytime they do repair the problem is properly repaired.”

**As for traceability?**

“We can typically trace anything in less than 10 minutes,” he said. “A very important component of the food industry is receiving good reviews from food industry audits. One of the big ones is the BRC (British Research Counsel). With JustFoodERP, we’ve achieved an A in their audit for the last two years straight. That’s partly due to being able to look at the important information in the system. Very few companies get an A.”

# justfoodERP

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