



Case study: l'Anson Brothers; manufacturing/retail.

Established in 1900, l'Ansons Brothers Ltd. is a fourth generation family business that manufactures premier animal feedstuffs from its headquarters in Masham, Yorkshire.

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Introduction

Established in 1900, I'Ansons Brothers Ltd. is a fourth generation family business that manufactures premier animal feedstuffs from its headquarters in Masham, Yorkshire.

From a small shop I'Ansons has grown to be a £20M business, serving 3000 trade and direct customers in over 25 countries world-wide. I'Anson's prides itself on its excellent customer service and is prepared to invest in the latest technical solutions to keep it at the forefront of its industry.

The challenges

I'Ansons sells animal feedstuffs directly to farm customers and ingredients into the agricultural trade. The majority of business is conducted over the phone, with customers placing orders for both delivery and collection, with a small team of sales administrators. The order is recorded manually and passed through to the factory.

The key challenge facing I'Ansons was how to process orders more efficiently, to reduce manual systems, and to offer an even higher level of service and flexibility to its customers. "Andrew Birch, IT Manager at I'Ansons explains, "We wanted to implement systems that allowed our staff to access information about customers accounts more quickly. Our aim was to be able to provide both farmers and our trade customer with fast efficient service on the phone without the need to place them on hold or call them back. We wanted rapid access to information and intelligent interrogations that would allow us to process orders with a minimal amount of information, speeding the whole process up."

The solution

In order improve the efficiency of this operation I'Ansons conducted a thorough review of its entire technology infrastructure, including its manufacturing processes, CRM and IT platforms, and its aging TDM telephony system. Following this review I'Ansons decided on an ambitious plan to implement a fully unified IP-based infrastructure and a new ERP system that would be driven by the incoming telephone orders.

Birch explains, "The key to the success of this new project was procuring a suite of products that could seamlessly integrate with each other. Having selected Microsoft Dynamics AX as our ERP solution, it was vital that we find a telephony system that met the same technological standards and provided similar levers of customisability as the Microsoft products we had chosen. I looked at a number of different systems, including Cisco, but Swyx was the only product on the market that offered a "pure" IP solution, with no need for 3rd party additions, that enabled us to run our telephony services as a software application on a Windows 2003 Server. The advantage of this was that, not only was the integration very simple as Swyx is based on Microsoft technology, but we could run everything over our local area network, on a single unified infrastructure. We concluded that Swyx offered enterprise functionality, from a single source, at a price affordable to an organisation our size."

The results

A 30-user Swyx solution has now been fully installed and its integration with the Microsoft Dynamic AX CRM module is well underway. Andrew Birch comments on the results so far, "In short, the Swyx system has been fantastic, the users really like the fact that the screen will pop-up with all the client's details as soon as the call comes in providing them all the information they need at their finger tips. This will help us achieve our aim of providing rapid services to customers. The system has worked so well that we have been able to process an increasing number of orders with fewer staff. The system also gives us the option to record calls and attach the recording to the customer file, thus creating a complete record of a transaction if required".

The implementation of Swyx has had a numerous positive impacts upon the business. Andrew Birch explains, "The improved efficiency has allowed us to be more proactive in our order management. Efficient order processing has given us the time and the information required to anticipate monthly orders, calling the farmers in advance to schedule a delivery rather than wait until they call us. This has all contributed positively to our commitment to provide the highest levels of customer service as well realising savings resulting from improved efficiency. Another, major saving is the cost of administering the system itself. In the past this was all carried out by an annual maintenance contract; moves and changes could only be carried out by the service company. With Swyx all system configurations can be carried out "live" without the need to involve a third party."

The future

I'Anson's expect to leverage the investment that they have made in Swyx well into the future by adding a number of very exciting applications that will further enhance the company's reputation as a leader in applying innovative technology solutions to improve their business processes.

Andrew Birch Explains, "Another key reason for choosing Swyx was the "open standard software". I had identified a number of other voice driven applications, such as making our sales representatives always available to our customers regardless of whether they were in the office or on their mobile phone. Currently, we can do this using the customised skin that Swyx provides. Using just two mouse clicks the receptionist can connect a customer to any phone, either in-house or to a mobile. In the future we will extend this capability using Swyx's SIP compatibility by deploying phones from Fujitsu-Siemens that can switch between GSM and our wireless office network. The users can log-on to Swyx using SIP on-site and then when they go off-site the SIP connection will drop and automatically switch to work on GSM. With Swyx's call routing capabilities, that transition can be handled transparently meaning you only every call the same extention number and the system decides how best to deliver the call."

Integrated Telephony-based time and attendance system

And it doesn't stop there! I'Ansons are already working on another application using Swyx that overcomes a limitation with the company's existing clocking –in/out system. Andrew explains, "The existing "Proximity System" would not allow employees who work off-site or start before the site is fully open to clock in. If they clocked off at the end of the day without clocking in then the system would clock them in twice and cause all sorts of problems. We have written a simple script, using Swyx graphical script editor, that we call "Teleclock".

An employee can now clock-in off-site and clock-out from the office, or vice versa using his mobile phone and a PIN number, he dials in and the system prompts him for his PIN, this identifies the employee record, he then enters 1 to clock-in or 2 to clock-out or 3 to leave a message. Swyx also checks the CLI (calling line ID) to make sure the phone being used is an authorised one.

"The ability to develop systems such as these is what makes Swyx so user friendly and flexible. When compared to other enterprise such as Cisco, Swyx's intergrated approach allows SMEs like our to leverage features and benefits usually the preserve of much larger firms. I've yet to see another platform that offers so much at the same price point."

Andrew Birch sums up his experience with Swyx, "Swyx is a truly unique product in the telephony market, it is feature-rich and its method of implementation make the product the most innovative and intergrated that I have come across".

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I'Anson Brothers.

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