

BWG Foods

BWG Foods adapts to the changing retail landscape with CODA Financials

BWG Foods has been operating since 1963 with its headquarters in Walkinstown, Dublin 12. BWG own and operate the SPAR and MACE retail franchises in Ireland which have an annual retail turnover in excess of €2 billion. The company also operates a nation-wide network of 22 wholesale Cash and Carry's that trade under the Value Centre and BWG Foodservice business names.

In 2006 BWG Foods merged the accounting departments of its wholesale grocery business and its property division. Until then their respective finance departments had run separate financial systems. Both systems struggled to equip senior management with the reports and visibility they required to operate the business efficiently. Creating reports was a difficult and frustrating process. Two systems had to be interrogated and making changes to either existing accounting application was not an option.

Apart from the obvious issues that arose from running two systems in one business, the most significant concern was the system's inability to monitor and adapt to change, as emphasised by Finance Director Aidan Keane: "Retail is arguably the most dynamic vertical sector. Our managers need to access information and reports on a timely basis and in a way that is tailored to their needs." It was a lengthy and difficult process to extract reports, by the time information was available to senior executives the data would often be out of date and therefore a very poor barometer on which to make decisions.

These inefficiencies clearly didn't fit with the ambitions of the company and the search began for a new, unified finance system.

CODA solutions from UNIT4, the right choice

The BWG Finance team embarked upon a rigorous three-month evaluation process, searching for a single replacement system. Initial fact-finding identified four possible suppliers

who were invited to meet with the team and discuss the issues and possible solutions. As a result, two suppliers were short-listed and after further rigorous consideration CODA Financials from UNIT4 was the clear winner. Keane explained why, "The key criteria were to select a solution that could firstly consolidate the disparate financial data and secondly had the capability to provide rapid access to strategic financial information held within that data. The CODA system demonstrated both and it was clear that it would equip our managers with the financial tools they need to thrive in this ever-changing retail landscape."

A Finance System to manage change

The implementation of CODA Financials and CODA XL started in July and went live in November. The project immediately realised considerable benefits by unifying the Company's processes, as outlined by Keane: "Aside from the obvious economies of scale, the CODA system has streamlined our business processes, significantly reduced administration costs, improved productivity and enabled us to report to the regulator with minimum fuss."

The amount of time and effort put into consolidating year-end accounts has been reduced considerably; the entire process now taking just two to three weeks. "This is a real achievement. We have 78 companies operating in the property division alone, so although the books are far from simple, the CODA system, has taken away the complexity and frustration of balancing them", said Keane.

He went on, "The biggest benefit has been equipping senior management with the information they need to manage finances according to market change. Times recently have been tough in Ireland, but managers can now access the financial information they need to navigate through these turbulent times." High level finance information is captured from the system, organised by department and displayed via a desktop portal. The portal has an intuitive interface allowing managers to drill down into metrics at the click of a button, as and when required. This includes the option to view individual scanned documents such as invoices, essentially removing paper and its inherent inefficiencies from the system.

Self-service has empowered senior executives. They now have the information and functionality needed to adapt the business to changing needs at their fingertips, whether through cutting costs, analysing sales, re-apportioning finances or examining granular level transactions.

This self-service approach is a marked improvement upon the previous system; managers no longer have to rely on constant and time-consuming liaison with the finance team which in turn has reduced the strain on the finance department. Across the business there is now less administration, yet crucially far more flexibility to manage and even to anticipate change.

Keane summarised the huge success of the implementation, "It is more than an IT application; it is a business enabler that is invaluable in helping us to stay one step ahead of the competition."

ABOUT UNIT4

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UNIT4 headquarters

We have a broad portfolio of solutions that address different markets, requirements, technologies and types of organization. The company is a top six mid-market ERP software player globally and the 2nd largest European ERP supplier.

With offices in 19 countries worldwide UNIT4 is headquartered in the Netherlands.

The Group incorporates a number of the world's leading change embracing software brands including Agresso Business World, an ERP solution for services intensive organisation, and CODA Financials, a best-of-class financial management software suite. Both solutions are widely used in shared services centres for public and commercial organisations worldwide.

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Cardale Park, Beckwith Head Road
Harrogate HG1 1RY, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)1423 509 999 F +44 (0)1423 530 525
E info.uk@unit4.com

UNIT4 Business Software Limited

Registered UK Addresses

St. George's Hall, Easton-in-Gordano
Bristol BS20 0PX, United Kingdom

T +44 (0)1275 377 200 F +44 (0)1275 377 201
E info.uk@unit4.com