FUJITSU

Case Study
Hellers

»The new system makes it easier for us to move and track stock while meeting strict compliance regulations. We're reducing waste and cost while we increase productivity«

Dominic Stove, IT Manager, Hellers

The customer

Country: New Zealand
Industry: Manufacturing
Founded: 1985
Employees: 400+
Website: www.hellers.co.nz

The challenge

Hellers wanted to replace some elements of its aging legacy factory IT system in order to enable more accurate inventory tracking while reducing costs and waste and providing a modern technology platform so they were no longer locked them into proprietary software, and without impacting its integration with the Dynamics NAV ERP system.

The solution

Hellers turned to long term partner Fujitsu with whom the company had previously worked, to design, develop and deploy a new .NET framework integrated with the existing Dynamics NAV ERP system. In addition asking Fujitsu to provide guidance, leadership and quality assurance to support the delivery.

The customer

The Heller family tradition of butcheries began when Gorg Heller emigrated from Germany to New Zealand during the gold rush of the 1880s and started supplying the gold miners from a small shop in Arrowtown. Todd Heller continued the long line of butchers by opening his first butchery in New Brighton, Christchurch, in 1985. Inspired by his travels and the cooking styles of different cultures, Todd began offering greater variety and new flavours.

Today, the company's modern plants have kept pace with technology without compromising the traditional values and standards of quality upon which its reputation has been founded. Every week Hellers produces over 4 million sausages and over 3 million slices of bacon.

The challenge

Hellers relies on the Scanning system, a front-end system used by its Warehouse Department to manage and track finished goods stocks in warehouses. The system has two components. The first one is the Scanning used by the Warehouse. The other is the Scanning website which is utilised by specific office personnel for the management of the Scanning system including displaying views and running reports. Recently, Hellers embarked on a modernisation programme based on European systems. The objective was to improve process throughout the plant while enabling more accurate tracking of the yield.

"Some of our existing systems were reaching end of life so we wanted to deploy a more effective, modern solution," explains Dominic Stove, IT Manager, Hellers. "We toured five sites in Europe to see what technology would be a good fit however, we discovered that the while Hellers produces multiple different products on the same production lines daily, most European producers have much longer run-rates with a more limited product range. We produce around 450 different SKUs in our plant, making us akin to a small artisanal butcher but on a massive scale."

Hellers had been using a leading global provider of advanced equipment, systems and services to the fish, meat and poultry processing industries, for its production-labelling system which sends information to the ERP platform, Dynamics NAV. However, following an 18 month migration to the latest version, the company found that the production-labelling system was no longer fit for purpose.

"The way we do business isn't compatible with the way the system is written. We were finding that we were having to do too many work-arounds to make it fit with our processes," adds Stove.

The benefit	Products and services
■ The project came in on time and under budget ■ Time to create yield reports reduced to under a minute means employees can access and respond to critical data quickly ■ Reduces wastage in the inventory and lowers costs ■ Any device can plug into the new interface, increasing flexibility and enhancing functionality ■ Better efficiency means that fresher, tastier food gets to the supermarket shelves faster	■ Technical Architecture Framework in .NET ■ Microsoft Dynamics Navision integration ■ Business Analysis consulting ■ Business process specification ■ Test Management ■ Project Management

"So we thought about putting together a new solution in-house built to meet industry standard design and processes. We wanted to migrate the Scanning system from Python to .NET, develop a new weighing system and integrate both with Dynamics NAV."

Hellers has long relied on Fujitsu for a range of IT services, including mail, financials and ERP so it was the natural partner for this ambitious project. In the past, Fujitsu had managed a number of smaller projects on the ERP system, notably the upgrade to Dynamics Nav 2009. Hellers Factory Production System including the Gun (bar code scanner), Factory and Warehouse systems feeds data into Dynamics NAV ERP, which is used for a range of activities including all financial, order processing and inventory management.

"We can't afford any downtime with Dynamics NAV as it is at the heart of our production process so carrying out the upgrade was a challenge. Our initial estimate for this upgrade was 5 days. We didn't have the luxury of taking five days to make the transition so we had a carefully planned upgrade process," says Stove. "We reduced the expectation to take at least 22 hours but we brought it in at 18 hours in the end. That means there was minimal disruption to the business."

The solution
Fujitsu provided Hellers with a technical architecture and development platform that supported the internal development of an enterprise-wide inventory and tracking solution. The solution was developed using the Microsoft toolset and deployed on Windows in order to provide maintainability, supportability and enabling continued development. The system provides an extension to Dynamics NAV enabling end-users to execute system functions, with products able to be tracked from the loading dock to the factory floor. Hellers asked Fujitsu to provide support to improve their delivery methodology, tools and templates, especially around Project Management, development quality assurance and testing. The bulk of development was performed by Hellers with Fujitsu providing framework components, solution architecture, development patterns, QA and technical guidance.

The benefit
Hellers is enjoying multiple benefits since the first elements of the new integrated system have gone live. Not only was it completed on time but it also was under budget.

The company can now produce an accurate yield report in an instant, meaning better visibility of product. "Previously, it would take 45 minutes to produce a yield report so lots of people simply didn't bother. That meant errors weren't picked up in time and lots of stock was wasted as a result. Now they get the report in under a minute," continues Stove. "So we can see instantly if anything is out of place and remedy it. That makes for huge savings in the amount of product we don't have to put on hold.

"The ability to run multiple satellite production systems that synchronise to a central database also allows us to continue running while the Dynamics NAV server is down for maintenance, or performing large processing tasks. The satellite systems just cache the data and update the central system when it becomes available again. This also means that factory and warehouse workers aren't adversely affected when the central system is busy."

And the new interface is open so Hellers is no longer locked into proprietary software: "virtually any device can plug into the new platform which gives us flexibility and the potential to bring down costs while enhancing functionality. The new system makes it easier for us to move and track stock while meeting strict compliance regulations. We're reducing waste and cost while we increase productivity," concludes Stove. "Compared to our competitors, our efficiency is now incredible, which means we can get a wider range of fresher food to the shelves faster. And that means better, safer food."

Conclusion
Fujitsu has been reliable, proactive and efficient, enabling Hellers to undertake this project confidently. With the factory system already up and running, Fujitsu is now working with Hellers on the warehouse deployment.

"Fujitsu knows what it is doing – every stage has come in on time and on budget. It's rare for a vendor to perform so consistently."

Dominic Stove, IT Manager, Hellers