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Doire Reid
Senior Functional Business Analyst
PlaceMakers

Boosting productivity through process transformation

At a glance

Country: New Zealand
Industry: Retail/Manufacturing
Founded: 1981
Website: placemakers.co.nz

Challenge

PlaceMakers relied on email and telephone to manage the introduction or alteration of products and suppliers, which are core retail processes, leading to long wait times as well as frustrated employees and suppliers. The company wanted to automate three key processes to improve visibility and reduce administration.

Solution

PlaceMakers chose FUJITSU RunMyProcess to build three new applications from scratch that would automate and streamline the processes, taking data from each branch via a simple form, routing it to the appropriate approval manager and speeding-up the onboarding of new suppliers and products.

Benefit

- Approval times reduced from up to two months to under seven days
- New suppliers and products reach the shelves more quickly
- Reduced administration improves employee productivity
- Real-time audit trails provide total process transparency
- Purchasing patterns across the company can be scrutinised to leverage economies of scale

Customer

PlaceMakers is New Zealand's leading and largest supplier of building materials and hardware, with over 2,100 employees and more than 300,000 customers. It has 61 stores, from Kaitaia to Invercargill, and sells over 74,000 product lines from concrete to paint and plasterboard. The company also manufactures frames and trusses from eight manufacturing plants nationwide.

Products and Services

■ FUJITSU RunMyProcess



Modernising dated business processes

With 61 stores across New Zealand, managing inventory and stock has always been a challenge for PlaceMakers. Slow, inefficient legacy systems required complex processes and there was no way to clearly track approvals for new product requests. The company wanted to digitally transform three business processes to improve efficiency and productivity: onboarding new suppliers; modifying existing suppliers; and approving new product requests.

"If a branch requests a new product, it has to be approved by head office which issues the product codes – the new item cannot be sold until it is in the system," explains Doire Reid, Senior Functional Business Analyst, PlaceMakers. "However, there was no central, automated repository for this information. That means emails or phone calls would come in and get missed because someone was on holiday; there was a lot of chasing by telephone and so approvals could take up to two months. Needless to say, this proved immensely frustrating for everyone involved."

With around 30 new product codes requested monthly, not to mention regular changes to existing suppliers and adding new suppliers, PlaceMakers was eager to modernise its business processes. The company went to market and looked at a number of solutions before coming across FUJITSU RunMyProcess.

"We were looking for a solution that would be easy to use and that we could manage in-house to keep costs down," adds Reid. "RunMyProcess is easy to pick up, intuitive and cost-effective so it was a great fit for this project."

Introducing efficient integration

FUJITSU RunMyProcess uses the power of the cloud and the openness of the web to produce a new kind of platform, which replaces slow change processes and monolithic systems with digital systems at a fundamentally faster speed. RunMyProcess' sophisticated application development, process management and integration capabilities enabled the creation of three new applications that would manage PlaceMakers' critical processes more efficiently and transparently.

"We specified which processes we needed to modernise and the RunMyProcess team then walked us through how it would apply to the software," continues Reid. "We then supplied the data and the personnel with the approval authorisation and built three brand new systems from scratch."

Over the course of two months, PlaceMakers and Fujitsu worked closely together to co-create these solutions, each of which simplifies and speeds up the tasks involved. Now, users in each branch can log on, select a new product or supplier, fill in a concise form and hit submit. This request is then automatically routed to the appropriate category manager for approval, creating an audit trail in real-time that can be tracked at any stage.

"We wanted to keep it simple and intuitive so we wouldn't have to train over 2,000 employees; at the same time, we wanted visibility so each branch and supplier can see what the status is," says Reid. "RunMyProcess gives us those capabilities meaning we can deliver better service to suppliers and customers alike."

Improved transparency, speed and productivity

The new RunMyProcess applications have slashed response times from weeks to under seven days, enabling PlaceMakers to build new partnerships with suppliers more quickly and with more trust. Faster approval times means less down time between customer deliveries, less time spent doing administrative work and more meaningful time spent within the business to focus on the customer. By reducing the administrative burden, it has also lowered costs and employee frustration.

"Previously, when a branch or supplier called HQ, it was a case of: 'we don't know the status'; now, we can see bottlenecks and resolve them quickly so that requests are actioned in well under a week," comments Reid. "This means there is less blame because requests no longer get lost or held up – that, combined with a huge reduction in administration, makes for a happier and more productive workforce."

Such transparency also gives PlaceMakers a better understanding of which products are being requested so it has a much clearer view of market trends. For example, if a small branch is buying lots of niche products from a local supplier, it might make more sense for them to leverage the corporate buying power and get a better rate.

"FUJITSU RunMyProcess allows us to take advantage of economies of scale though greater visibility of our supply network and the associated demands," concludes Reid. "Fujitsu itself has been responsive and willing to accommodate our changes, taking our ideas and transposing them seamlessly. It is a tremendously rewarding partnership."

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