DPSI Customer Success Story: Sonoco

Overview:

Sonoco, a $2.6 billion manufacturer of industrial and consumer products and packaging, has achieved $235 million in productivity gains since 1997, thanks in part to an innovative, Web-based CMMS system that ties together multiple plants in 32 countries.

Market:

Manufacturing

Product:

Sonoco (NYSE: SON) is a $2.6 billion manufacturer of industrial and consumer products and provider of packaging services, with approximately 300 operations in 32 countries serving customers in some 85 nations. Sonoco's packages surround some of the world's most recognizable brands found in pantries, stores and manufacturing plants virtually everywhere.

The industry recognizes Sonoco's packages regularly with awards, such as the 2002 WorldStar Awards for Sonoco's Valve-Pak coffee can for customer Melitta Canada; a Valve-Pak can for the United Kingdom's Gala Coffee; and an environmentally friendly paper-bottom can created for Bisto Gravy Granules, another UK product. Gillette also recently recognized Sonoco with the Omnimark Award in recognition of a perfect, or near-perfect, record in providing outstanding quality and service to Gillette's manufacturing centers.

Sonoco's shareholders have also been rewarded—having maintained more than 75 years of dividend payments, Sonoco's strategic objective is to achieve average annual double-digit growth in total return to shareholders, with returns on capital and equity in the top quartile of the Standard & Poor's 500 Index.

The Challenge: A Cost-Effective CMMS

One of the key goals of Sonoco's operating strategy is continuous improvement in productivity. Since 1997, Sonoco has achieved some $235 million in productivity gains, mainly in manufacturing, but also from purchasing, logistics and administrative functions. In the maintenance arena, improvement efforts have focused on three drivers: preventive maintenance, failure analysis and planning.

To achieve its goals, Sonoco needed a cost-effective computerized maintenance management system (CMMS). Using a CMMS would allow the Company to standardize metrics and reporting, share parts and procedures, and implement improvements in preventive maintenance, failure analysis and planning. While some of the Company's larger plants had a CMMS, smaller facilities couldn't always economically justify the purchase and ongoing support of such software.

The Solution: Web-Based iMaint

Enter Mike Chambers, Corporate Maintenance and Reliability Champion at Sonoco. A believer in Web technology advances, he had heard about an enterprise asset management package from DPSI called iMaint. Sonoco already had experience using another software package from DPSI — PMC — which is one of the most widely used and successful CMMS in the world. Feedback from employees about PMC was positive, so Chambers decided to evaluate iMaint to determine if it would meet the Company's needs.

Chambers put together an assessment team including members representing Sonoco plants of various sizes, and made a visit to DPSI's headquarters in Greensboro, N.C. They sat down with Fred Riek, DPSI chairman and CEO, Carol Owens, DPSI president, and other DPSI staff. "We evaluated iMaint from top to bottom," says Chambers.

"After the trip, I asked each team member to provide a critique of what they had seen in Greensboro compared to what they had seen at other vendors or at their own plants," Chambers continues. "Sonoco used a quantitative process to compare iMaint against software from two other vendors. One of the other vendors had DPSI beat in some aspects. But when we looked at the total package, including cost, DPSI won."

Three factors influenced Sonoco's decision: customer support, functionality, and cost.

"DPSI has an excellent focus on meeting the customer's needs," Chambers remarks.

"The people who were using PMC at Sonoco were very complimentary about DPSI's technical support. While you expect a high level of support during installation and implementation, with some vendors the interest wears off quickly. DPSI has been and continues to be very responsive in all respects."

Chambers adds, "Going back to our three drivers, for failure analysis and planning we found that iMaint has capabilities that are above and beyond the other packages. iMaint is easier to use for failure analysis, and for planning provides the ability to put in multiple tasks, costs and schedules for a specific work order. In some of the other packages we considered, you would have to do a plan or cost estimate in a word-processing document or spreadsheet and attach it."

On the subject of cost, Chambers notes, "We could have spent less money, but for the functionality and service we wanted, iMaint was the most cost-effective solution."

Improved Productivity and Cost Savings

"Choosing a Web-based solution like iMaint allows us to provide a powerful, full-featured asset management solution to all of our facilities, large and small," says Chambers. "Plants all over the world will be able to use the same software and the same asset management processes. We will be able to standardize our procedures and metrics, and we will be able to roll out improvements worldwide faster than we could before."

"Having a hosted solution also provides significant cost advantages," adds Chambers. "We don't have the expense of installing and managing the hardware for our new system, and we require fewer staffing resources to support it. The net result is that our overall installed cost decreases."

"Working with the people at DPSI is a pleasure. Time after time they have gone beyond what was required to meet our needs," Chambers concludes. "We're very pleased with our purchasing decision."

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