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— JON BEMROSE

GROUP DATA INTEGRITY CONTROLLER
R & R ICE CREAM



R & R Ice Cream

Corporate Profile

Founded just over 25 years ago when a Yorkshire farmer acquired a local ice cream manufacturer, R & R Ice Cream has since grown through a series of mergers and acquisitions to encompass some of the UK’s best-loved brands. These include Nestlé, Fab, Mivvi, Yorkie, Rolo, Smarties, After Eight and Skinny Cow, the leading brand in the UK healthy ice cream sector. In addition to supplying retailers with individual ice creams for impulse purchase, the company also produces its own label multi-packs, tubs and ice cream desserts for most of the major multiples, accounting for approximately 60 percent of the company’s UK turnover of more than £130 million.

In 2006, the company was bought by private equity investor Oaktree Capital Management Limited, which also owns Roncadin, a European-based ice cream manufacturer. The two companies are currently being combined into a joint operation, R&R Ice Cream, which will leverage both companies’ strong market positions and reputation for high quality products to serve customers on a Pan-European basis.


Business Challenge

Complicated Product Data plus Mergers and Acquisitions Creates Change You Can’t Ignore

For R & R Ice Cream, change is the only constant factor where its portfolio of products is concerned. The company launches an average of one new product a day and frequently makes changes to the recipes or packaging of its existing products. Supplying accurate, consistent and complete data to its trading partners for those products can be a real headache.

“Because we’ve been through so many mergers and acquisitions, we’ve done a lot of work to get the product data in our internal systems into good shape,” explains Jon Bemrose, Group Data Integrity Controller for R & R Ice Cream. “But we hadn’t done much about supplying that data to external users, especially the retailers who are our customers. We need to provide product data to their systems in order to get our products listed by them and in their stores, and we need to be able to do that in as cost effective a way as possible.”

R & R Ice Cream’s average product contains ten to twenty different ingredients and three or four items of packaging when taking into account the individual wrapping, carton, case and perhaps a lolly stick. R & R Ice Cream has to supply detailed product data to each of its customers’ systems. The data is used to support traceability in the event of a product recall and allow retailers to provide nutritional information to consumers as well as manage the product through the supply chain.



The task of managing all this product data is complicated by the fact that R & R Ice Cream frequently introduces new products—averaging around 300 a year in the last two years—and discontinues others. Overall, it has a rolling portfolio of around 500 products; including some 200 products that are no longer in production because they are short-term promotions, or new launches that didn't achieve the anticipated sales.

In addition, the products themselves also change frequently. Changes in consumer behavior, particularly the growth of interest in healthier eating, has required R & R Ice Cream to remove artificial colorings and flavorings, and eliminate hydrogenated vegetable oils from its ranges. These changes impact the buying department who has to source ingredients for new suppliers, requiring the bill of materials for every product using that ingredient to be updated. Also, there are frequent changes to packaging, such as temporary promotional prices flashes, or longer term redesign of artwork.

The Solution

Product Data Quality Management with GXS

To handle these needs, R & R Ice Cream began working with GXS, and the preferred partner for some of its major customers like Tesco, to upload, verify and share data with its trading partners. R & R Ice Cream initially used Product Data Quality (PDQ) to capture its product data and submit it to GXS for validation. However, it soon became apparent that R & R Ice Cream could benefit from the capabilities of PDQ to handle mass changes and uploads.

Bemrose says PDQ is straightforward to use. Anyone with an understanding of how to create Excel macros can add powerful functions to automate specific tasks. “I simply download our data into PDQ, select the products I want to work on, use the functions of Excel to compare data or make bulk changes to attributes, and then upload the data back to GXS for validation,” he explains.

The Benefits

Improved Data Quality Increases the Ease of Doing Business and Overall Greater Customer Satisfaction

PDQ makes it easy for Bemrose to compare the company's product data as currently held by GXS with data held in R & R Ice Cream's internal systems. This data may have been updated by their buyers, food technicians and marketers as changes are made to products. “For example, when the artificial colouring was removed from the recipe for blue Smarties that affected around twenty of our products. I was able to update the data for all those products in a morning using PDQ.” Bemrose estimates that without PDQ, R & R Ice Cream would need to employ another member of staff to manage its data.

He adds that PDQ helps him identify where data is missing or inaccurate and ensure Global Data Synchronisation (GDS) mandates are complete for all products. “It's easier to spot errors when you're able to compare the same attribute for multiple products,” he points out. “I can use it to critique and improve our existing data. I can also carry out more validation on our

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“PDQ has been a key factor in the ability of our logistics team to drive up service levels by three percent to more than 98 percent over the past year. When we’ve taken over other brands, we’ve been able to get all necessary systems up and running within a month. Before we had PDQ, it might take us as long as three months because we weren’t able to handle the product data as efficiently or easily.”

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data prior to uploading to PDQ, reducing the number of queries that come back from the quality assurance process.”

And PDQ doesn’t just make Bemrose’s job easier. “PDQ has been a key factor in the ability of our logistics team to drive up service levels by three percent to more than 98 percent over the past year,” Bemrose says. “Because the data we deliver to customers is more accurate and they’re using the correct GTINs, we see fewer errors and exceptions when getting products listed and in our EDI-based ordering and invoicing. That means fewer queries from customers and less time spent by both us and our customers on sorting out supply chain issues.”

PDQ has also supported R & R Ice Cream’s aggressive expansion by acquisition. “When we’ve taken over other brands, we’ve been able to get all necessary systems up and running within a month,” Bemrose explains. “Before we had PDQ, it might take us as long as three months because we weren’t able to handle the product data as efficiently or easily.” Following the buyout by Oaktree, R & R Ice Cream is also providing advice to Roncadin on how to manage its product data more effectively.

“PDQ makes it easier for us to handle the sheer volume of changes in our product range, helps us spot errors and increase the accuracy of our data, and share that data with our trading partners—quickly and cost-effectively,” Bemrose concludes. “That supports our goal of becoming the UK’s largest ice cream manufacturer.”

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About GXS

GXS is a leading global provider of B2B e-commerce solutions that simplify and enhance business process integration, synchronization and collaboration among trading partners. Organizations worldwide, including 75 percent of the Fortune 500, leverage the GXS Trading Grid™ to extend supply networks, optimize product launches, automate warehouse receiving, manage electronic payments and gain supply chain visibility. With an unmatched global presence, proven trading partner management and B2B outsourcing services, GXS's on-demand solutions maximize the benefits of integration for businesses. Based in Gaithersburg, MD, GXS's extensive global network serves customers throughout the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Africa and Asia Pacific regions. GXS can be found on the Web at www.gxs.com.