
TYPE
CASE STUDY

INDUSTRY
FOOD AND BEVERAGE

LOCATION
OVERLAND PARK, KS

OWS FOODS AUTOMATES SCHEDULING AND PLANNING

control+m solutions helps ows use plex to increase demand forecasting accuracy and reduce customer lead times

Control+M Solutions, LLC, provides support and in-depth Plex expertise with system and module implementation, optimization, and training.

OWS Foods is a premier manufacturer of sauces, dressings and marinades, and seasonings, rubs and dry mixes.



CHALLENGE

- No single tool to view and forecast customer demand
- Manual scheduling system
- Data from multiple sources
- Employee efficiencies



SOLUTION

- Plex Smart Manufacturing Platform™



RESULTS

- Single source supply chain visibility
- Demand forecasting accuracy increased by 25%
- Customer lead times reduced by 33%
- Improved employee recruitment and retention



Michael Farrow is IT Director, [OWS Foods](#), and Patti Nowak is owner, [Control+M Solutions](#). OWS Foods is a premier manufacturer of sauces, dressings and marinades and seasonings, rubs and dry mixes. They've used the [Plex Smart Manufacturing Platform™](#) for 10 years to help grow their business and positively impact daily operations.

Control+M is a Gold-level system integrator in the Rockwell Automation PartnerNetwork™. The four-time Plex Impact Award winner, including Partner of the Year in 2023, focuses exclusively on helping clients successfully deploy and use the platform.

They've supported OWS since the manufacturer's initial Plex implementation.

"We first started working with OWS to put them on a path to use Plex to acquire and grow organically themselves versus having to rely on an external partner. Once we started working together, we began to find other ways Plex could benefit their business including a recent project focused on their scheduling system."

PATTI NOWAK
Owner, Control+M Solutions, LLC



AUTOMATE SCHEDULING PROCESS ACROSS FACILITIES

OWS operates dry and wet manufacturing facilities in both make to order and make to stock environments. Make to order is producing product when the customer requests it while make to stock is producing product beforehand in anticipation of customer need.

“The main scheduling lead is procurement of raw materials and packaging supplies. If you can properly put that lead time in the

system then you can plan accordingly and bring that procurement in when you need it,” Farrow explained. “But previously we had a manual scheduling system with lots of Post-It notes on the monitors and no single way to see and plan for demand.”

MICHAEL FARROW
IT Director, OWS Foods



PLEX DEMANDCASTER PROVIDES SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY

With Control+M's guidance, OWS implemented Plex's DemandCaster, Finite Scheduling and other platform capabilities, such as job set creation, to automate and improve scheduling, planning, and procurement.

"DemandCaster provides OWS with a scientific approach to forecasting customer demand," Nowak said. "Now they can view procurement requirements for both their wet and dry facilities at one time in one place so they can get economies of scale and purchasing, reduce expedite fees, and achieve other related benefits." Added Farrow, "We see all our procurement and scheduling infor-

mation on one screen instead of trying to find multiple sources of data."

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT KEY TO SUCCESS

Employee input was an important first step in the new system's development.

"OWS held a two-day scheduling summit with the procurement and scheduling people. Everyone pertinent to the situation was in one room taking the time to review the processes and how they could be better," Nowak explained. "If more companies had the time to do that, they might see some of the success that OWS Foods did."



EXCEED CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS WITH REDUCED LEAD TIMES

The results have been significant.

“Our forecasting accuracy increased by about 25% and we reduced our lead time for some make to order customers from 42 days to 28 days,” Farrow explained. “By being able to plan and schedule in line with demand, we can promise that order to the customer a little bit sooner than they might expect.”

For OWS, system automation has also allowed scheduling employees to focus their time and efforts on more meaningful tasks.

“What took a lot of human effort is now close to being fully automated,” Nowak said. “Which means schedulers can spend their time doing value-added activities.”

IMPROVE EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Nowak noted that OWS’s use of Plex’s smart manufacturing platform makes the company a more attractive employer to young adults who expect their hiring organizations to be current with today’s technologies. It also enhances employee retention and advancement.

“We pride ourselves on giving opportunities within the company. We’ve had many people move up from the shop floor into the office for planning, scheduling and procurement roles,” Farrow explained. “Now they get the opportunity to work within one tool, see everything on one screen, and speak the same language together, which also adds a lot of value to the business.”

Learn more about the other forward-thinking ways OWS Foods uses Plex to [digitally transform](#) its operations and why this manufacturer is a previous [Plex Industry Leader Impact Award](#) winner.

ABOUT PLEX

Plex, by Rockwell Automation, is a leader in cloud-delivered smart manufacturing solutions, empowering the world’s manufacturers to make awesome products. Our platform gives manufacturers the ability to connect, automate, track, and analyze every aspect of their business to drive transformation. The Plex Smart Manufacturing Platform™ includes solutions for manufacturing execution (MES), ERP, quality, supply

chain planning and management, asset performance management, production monitoring, process automation and analytics to connect people, systems, machines and supply chains, enabling them to lead with precision, efficiency and agility. To learn more, visit www.plex.com