

Case Study



HighJump WMS and SAP Business One turn sour to sweet for Wing Yip

Wing Yip is the UK's leading Oriental grocer. With more than 40 years' experience in the Oriental food trade, the group now boasts four sites - in Birmingham, Manchester, Croydon and Cricklewood - each combining a Cash and Carry and a business centre.

Established by Mr Wing Yip and his brothers, and now with two generations of the family at the helm, the company has rapidly become one of the most celebrated Asian food stores, stocking more than 4,500 products. These authentic ingredients are supplied to discerning chefs, food enthusiasts and to Chinese and Asian restaurants across the UK.

Accounting inefficiencies due to manual reconciliations

Wing Yip had been using a bespoke back-office system that was heavily tailored to suit the business and that had been used for more than 17 years. Although the system integrated seamlessly into scales, EPOS, hand held scanners and the company's online shopping website, it didn't fully suit the changing needs of the business as it grew and evolved.

For the finance department, the issue was one of accuracy. Trading Group Finance Director, Phil Larmouth explains, "Despite all the software being 'best of breed', these were still disparate systems that required us to undertake numerous reconciliations and introduced the opportunity for human error and inconsistencies." Thus, producing a set of monthly management accounts was a very manual process. The department was heavily reliant on spreadsheets and the know-how of a few individuals.

Elaborates IT Manager, Tony Ritson, "Because the original system had been created bespoke



for us, it was a costly exercise to keep changing all the time. So we undertook a project to review other ERP systems."

Adds Andy Yarnall, Group Operations Manager, "Additionally, support for our legacy system was coming to an end, which gave us an opportunity to review our current position and to look at other solutions that would bring us more up to date and future proof the business."

Why choose Balloon One?

"Balloon One was one of the companies we were more confident could achieve what was required."

Operations Manager, Andy Yarnall

Wing Yip established a project team, with members drawn from across the business - from operations, warehousing, procurement, sales, IT and finance. It included directors, senior managers, supervisors and key staff. With help from an external partner, the team undertook a requirements analysis to determine what functionality the new ERP system would need, and selected software suppliers that could meet the company's needs.

Various different ERP solutions were seen,

from a number of suppliers, with each demonstrating their product. But one area of concern was the handling of variable weights. Andy Yarnall (Operations), clarifies, "Not many of the suppliers we saw could explain properly how their system would work with variably weighted products. Balloon One was one of the companies we were more confident could achieve what was required. They



also suggested using HighJump alongside SAP Business One, and the warehouse management system seemed to fit well with our business requirements."

Continues Yarnall (Operations), "The Valogix Inventory Planner was also another selling point that we concluded would help us with purchasing and the availability of products. And this was something that Balloon One had experience of. Plus, the Balloon team demonstrated a positive attitude of working together to solve the difficult issues."

Adds Tony Ritson (IT), "The standard SAP warehousing module was felt to be insufficient for our needs. In contrast, it was apparent that the HighJump warehouse solution fitted the criteria and we viewed it as a key part of the project."

Meeting a tight, fixed deadline

The design, programming and implementation process began in June and took nine months to complete, running across all four stores and the central distribution unit.

Ritson (IT) comments, "Balloon One was able to implement bespoke integrations that successfully linked all of our systems together into SAP Business One." Balloon One tailored the standard SAP Business One implementation and used Boyum IT, HighJump WMS, Valogix Inventory Planner and its own Springboard Communications Server to connect into Wing Yip's EPOS from Microsoft and the company's Avery Berkel weighing scales.

"The HighJump warehouse solution fitted the criteria and we viewed it as a key part of the project.."

IT Manager, Tony Ritson

Widening the project's reach, personnel from various departments at each store joined the project team, to ensure adequate training and a successful implementation was carried out at branch level.

A full review of each product line in the old system – some 13,000 lines – was undertaken. This mammoth task put considerable pressure on the go-live deadline of Easter Monday, at the end of the following March. With the business only closed twice a year – for two days at Christmas, and one at Easter – the deadline was immovable; the system needed to go live over Easter otherwise Wing Yip would have had to wait another nine months or a year. Recounts Yarnall (Operations), "This was a pretty tight deadline and reviewing each line was a painful exercise. But it was crucial in

ensuring the new SAP system had the correct data at launch. Our internal project team held frequent meetings with Balloon One where internal procedures were discussed alongside any implementation issues that came up as we went along."

"Come Monday morning at nine, our first successful EPOS transaction was made and we all breathed a sigh of relief."

IT Manager, Tony Ritson

On the day before go live - Easter Sunday - with the operations closed down and all the stores closed for the Easter break, there were teams in each store plus three Balloon One staff at head office and one in each store ready to carry out testing as the new system went live. Says Yarnall (Operations) of the process, "In general, the tests went well. We expected, and experienced, a few minor issues, but these were resolved by Balloon One as they came up."

He continues, "On Easter Monday, we opened the business for the first time with SAP Business One and HighJump running. There was a high initial learning curve, but ultimately everything went to plan."

Confirms Ritson (IT), "Come Monday morning at nine, our first successful EPOS transaction was made and we all breathed a sigh of relief."

Improved stock accuracy and more accurate picking

Wing Yip has seen improvements in many areas across the business. For Operations, "The biggest gain has come from HighJump, as stock accuracy and transparency has

greatly improved. Stock inventory checks are carried out weekly on key lines and are consistently accurate. We have seen better traceability of goods and our processes are better streamlined", enthuses Yarnall.

He adds, "Picking time is a little slower than it used to be, but it is much more accurate." With more accurate picking, time isn't wasted by Wing Yip warehouse operatives having to re-pick items, or by customer service staff having to deal with disgruntled customers who did not receive the right goods.

Around 80% of the group's 400 staff use HighJump or SAP Business One on a daily basis. There was some initial resistance to change, as is typically experienced with such widespread IT changes, but involving staff in the implementation process has meant Wing Yip has seen greater 'buy-in' from the staff as they have been more involved with the new software from the start.



Streamlined processes with better access to enhanced financial information

For the finance department, the changes have been significant. Reveals Larmouth (Finance), "There has been a marked improvement in our ability to produce management accounts. SAP Business One has not only reduced the number of reconciliations and manual journal entries, but it has also

given us greater transparency and visibility at a transaction level. This has highlighted areas where processes were weak or where controls were inadequate. We have focused on and prioritised these inefficiencies to drive improved performance throughout the business.”

“The functionality in SAP Business One provides a simpler methodology to identify and correct mistakes, again highlighting what processes need reinforcing and monitoring.”

Finance Manager, Phil Larmouth

The new systems have also presented the finance department with the opportunity to record more information in a single workspace. This has helped employees respond to customer and supplier queries themselves, rather than being reliant on another member of staff for the answer.

Members of the finance function are much more self-sufficient now, as SAP Business One provides the foundation that readily gives them the information they need to complete set tasks at their fingertips.

Concludes Larmouth (Finance), “Investigating erroneous-looking information has vastly improved. Previously the audit trail spanned multiple systems, linked through various spreadsheets and reports. The functionality in SAP Business One provides a simpler methodology to identify and correct mistakes, again highlighting what processes need reinforcing and monitoring.”

About Balloon One

Balloon One is an IT provider specialising in the distribution, implementation and support of business software and supply chain applications. Balloon One’s goal is to make large scale enterprise applications accessible to small and midsize companies with solutions that are affordable and easy to implement that deliver a rapid return on investment.

Backed by 20 years of experience Balloon One has customers in a wide range of markets, including: packaging, toys and gifts, clothing, wholesale, retail, timber,

DIY, education, leisure, IT, electronics, healthcare and chemicals.

In 2002, Balloon One was appointed as the first business partner for SAP Business One and today it is widely respected as a worldwide Business One centre of expertise. The company implements HighJump Warehouse solutions and in 2007 was awarded Partner of the Year by HighJump for its outstanding sales and implementation success.