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E-fish-ent catch

Seafood supplier Slade Gorton is netting more than fish these days. It is also gaining productivity while it has full visibility of all that swims in its supply stream.

SLADE GORTON IS ONE OF THE NATION'S LEADING WHOLESALEERS of seafood products, including its own brands—Soundings, Icy Bay and Gourmet Bay.

"You name it, we have it here," says Joe Sullivan, warehouse manager at the company's distribution center in Boston, Mass. "We carry every kind of fish from every country in the world."

Keeping track of all that fish as it moves from source to warehouse to customers is a lot easier thanks to SAP. Slade Gorton has been using SAP's enterprise and warehouse management systems in its South Boston warehouse for several years. And last year, the company rolled out SAP throughout its entire nationwide network, which consists of five sales offices and 35 freezer locations.

"Sales is now fully integrated with us here in Boston," says Bonnie Hardy, vice president of shared services for Slade Gorton. "We have designed our SAP system so that we function as a single sales office with multiple locations."

This permits all offices to see inventory at every location, which enables them to be more responsive to customer needs. It also allows Slade Gorton to be faster to market in a business where delays can, well, smell rather fishy.

Net results

SAP has also made filling customer orders more accurate and productive. The Boston warehouse ships about 30,000 cartons of seafood weekly. Most products are stored in a 30,000-square-foot freezer that keeps fish at a frosty 0 degrees F. The freezer can hold 3 million pounds of seafood. A cooler area also handles fresh items for local markets.

To fill orders, the SAP warehouse management system relays picking instructions to workers in the freezer equipped with RF

devices. Prior to SAP's implementation, workers were trying to pick from lists, which proved cumbersome for pickers wearing freezer gloves.

"We came from a system that was chaotic, lacking any type of process discipline, to one that forces us to be more process oriented, which provides greater controls. It made us more efficient right out of the box," says Hardy. "One action now leads to another. As an item is picked, our inventory is updated and customers are billed."



Since moving to a warehouse management system interfaced with its enterprise software, Slade Gorton has seen operations at its Boston DC go from chaotic to ordered.

Additionally, the SAP software has improved resource allocation. The system allows managers to look at each worker's productivity and realign labor as needed. SAP has also improved slotting and inventory accuracy. The cycle counting feature alone has eliminated the former practice of shutting down the facility to take an annual inventory.

SAP is also a very scalable system, able to add functionality as Slade Gorton has grown as a company.

"It has scaled with our growth at every turn. It really is nice to have a system that we won't have to rip out and replace every five years," says Hardy.

Later this year, Slade Gorton will be upgrading the core component of SAP's enterprise software, which will provide even greater functionality and will allow the company to better manage its inventory.

"SAP has been an end-to-end solution for us," adds Hardy. "It has helped us to be very disciplined and do more with our in-house resources. It allows us to be more productive."

Sounds like a great catch.

For more information on SAP's supply chain solutions, call 866-609-1064 or visit www.sap.com/wholesale.

To see a three-minute video of operations at Slade Gorton's Boston DC, go to www.dcvelocity.com and click on The SPEED Challenge.