

## STONEWALL KITCHEN

Global Specialty Foods Manufacturer Reduces Operational Costs and Achieves Dramatic, Long-Term Growth with Integrated ERP System

**Company:** Stonewall Kitchen

**Number of Employees:** 500

**Website:** www.stonewallkitchen.com

**Country or Region:** Headquartered in U.S., active globally

**Industry:** Specialty foods manufacturing and distribution  
Implementation partner: Columbus

### Software and Services

→ To-Increase Food

→ Microsoft Dynamics NAV

### Customer Profile

Stonewall Kitchen creates, manufactures, and distributes food products, household items, kitchen tools, and

tableware globally through its online, catalog, retail store, and trading partner channels.

### Business Situation

Anticipating intense growth, the company needed to replace its aging, disparate software tools with a unified, scalable business management solution.

### Solution

Stonewall Kitchen deployed To-Increase Food in integration with Microsoft Dynamics NAV and since then has evolved the solution with its changing business requirements.

When it became clear that Stonewall Kitchen, the specialty foods manufacturer and distributor of culinary and household items, was about to undergo dramatic growth, the company afforded itself a scalable, powerful technology platform to control and manage the business. Stonewall Kitchen implemented Microsoft Dynamics NAV in integration with To-Increase Food. The integrated ERP system has evolved with the fast-growing company since then, helping Stonewall Kitchen to operate efficiently and profitably while providing outstanding customer service, fulfilling exacting quality standards, and expanding into multiple retail channels.



## Key Benefits

- Scalable, flexible infrastructure for sustained growth
- Enablement for profitable, global multi-channel retail
- Reduction in operations and staffing costs through process efficiencies and automation
- Centralized resource for reporting and decision-making
- Ability to address quality concerns as soon as they emerge

## TO INCREASE

Stonewall Kitchen, based in York, Maine, manufactures a vast range of specialty foods, including jams, sauces, syrups, and others. The company also sells kitchen electronics, tableware, and products for the home. The Stonewall Kitchen headquarters facilities are a major tourist attraction. Since its founding in 1991, the company has grown to make 75,000 jars of product every day, run 11 company stores, serve customers in 42 countries, and offer its products in more than 6,000 stores in the U.S. Stonewall Kitchen sells through multiple channels: online, catalog, company stores, and retail partners. Almost every year, Stonewall Kitchen wins awards from the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade and other organizations.

### **The Need to Transition to a Businesswide Software Solution**

Soon after the company experienced its first breakthrough successes, founders Jonathan King and Jim Stott realized that, to continue operating as a growing, successful company, they needed the right software solution to help manage the business. At the time, Stonewall Kitchen ran several disparate systems, and struggled to see a full view of inventory, accurate product lead times, and customer data. Current systems and practices would not be able to maintain the company's customer service standards while it underwent dramatic, continuing growth. Lori King, Chief Operating Officer, says, "We were running tiny pieces of different software to handle everything and it was proving to be impossible. We had no inventory control and no item tracking, so it was very difficult to identify the source of any problems. We couldn't see any detail at item level, no reporting was available, and we couldn't tell which of our products were more profitable than others."

### **A Technology Provider and Integrated ERP System that Fit the Company**

Stonewall Kitchen considered a range of different ERP and business management products. "As a young, expanding company, our biggest challenge was managing our tremendous growth," says Jonathan King. "We were open to new technology and its possibilities, and we needed an ERP system that would grow as our company grew. What we didn't need was an ERP system that would bury our business." Stonewall Kitchen chose Microsoft Dynamics NAV in integration with To-Increase Food to provide standardized, industry-specific processes and capabilities. Collaborating with To-Increase partner and food industry specialist, Columbus Global, the company implemented the ERP system in 1999 and has used it to manage its production processes, financials, sales, and other business activities through the years of growth ever since. The integrated solution presents a unified software environment to technology users and is known to most employees simply as Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

The Columbus food team demonstrated deep industry expertise and a sound understanding of Stonewall Kitchen's business model. Consultants could effectively configure the ERP system to address the company's requirements and challenges. The collaboration between Stonewall Kitchen and Columbus continues to this day while the company continues to thrive, and Microsoft Dynamics NAV and To-Increase Food evolve



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## TO INCREASE

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along with it. Andrea Hall, Information Systems Director, says, "We have a wonderful working relationship with Columbus. What differentiates them from their competitors is that they don't just know software, they also understand our business. We may ask for additional features as we grow, but they will always give us a reality check and won't let us go wrong when a technology decision doesn't make good business sense. They enhance our creative ideas with sound business infrastructure, so the result is an even better solution."

### **ERP Evolves with the Organization**

The solution deployment, just like the many upgrades and enhancements since then, was an efficient, smooth process. "We had very little disruption to our business," says Hall. "It took a weekend to transfer orders from the old system and that was it." For Stonewall Kitchen employees, the new solution was fast and easy to learn, in most cases requiring a few hours of on-the-job training with a current system user. This turned out to be a huge benefit in peak times, when many seasonal employees join the company's teams.

As Jonathan King hoped, Microsoft Dynamics NAV did not bury the business, but supported the company's growth and helped it manage dramatically increasing volumes of sales and production. Stonewall Kitchen's sustained, substantial growth into company stores, catalog sales, a gift card program, a cooking school and café, and a wealth of product lines outside of specialty foods, happened and continues to take place on the basis of the Microsoft Dynamics and To-Increase technology.

### **Improving Organizational Productivity and Excellent Service Levels while Reducing Overhead**

Stonewall Kitchen relies on Microsoft Dynamics NAV to scale to customer demand and changing transaction volumes, which peak in the fourth quarter, when as much as 50 percent of the company's annual business happens. All customer histories, as well as product availability and delivery times are available in the integrated solution, enabling employees to provide superior customer service and place orders faster. Throughout the lifecycle of the implementation, the Microsoft and To-Increase solution also has scaled to facilitate increased productivity and efficient cross-divisional communication, enabling Stonewall Kitchen to focus on building its brand value and pursue its growth goals. The solution also provides many efficiencies that help keep the business manageable and economical. Says Hall, "For example, instead of having one or two people do invoicing all day long, we automate those processes and run them at night. That enables us to keep staffing levels the same while our business grows, instead of hiring more and more people."

### **Timely, Consistent Quality Management Tool**

The integrated ERP system is a crucial factor in Stonewall Kitchen's production and quality management. "All items, formulas, and bills-of-materials are in the system, available on the shop floor," explains Hall.



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Andrea Hall, Information Systems Director,  
Stonewall Kitchen

"The system collects shop floor data and creates instant alerts if something is out of scale or out of spec. Somebody can attend to it immediately. This is extremely important because it guarantees the high quality of our products. If we did not have this capability, we would not spot quality issues until a later stage in the process, when a product is already bottled and packaged, and our QA department is performing tests. At that point, it would be much harder and more expensive to make a correction. We save time and material expenses while maintaining the standard of quality we aim for."

### Enabling Runaway, Multi-Channel Retail Success

In the company's fast-moving business processes, the accuracy and availability of information is critical. "The system allows us to maintain accurate pricing and costing, and let employees across the company, from manufacturing to order fulfillment, look at the same information, in the same language," says Hall. "That ability is key in planning and decision-making. For employees, work has become a more action-oriented experience." The ERP solution's ability to support the many sales channels where Stonewall Kitchen has a presence also plays a big role in the company's successes. Hall notes, "We run very clever and creative promotions, which are not standard in the system, but it lets us build exactly what we need. We can step out of the box and offer promotions and discounts others cannot offer." Stonewall Kitchen team members at trade shows always have an instance of the integrated ERP solution available, so they can look up the sales histories of trading partners attending the events and sell to them more effectively.

"Microsoft Dynamics NAV helps us work faster and get more orders out the door. If we didn't have it, we would never be this big," says Lori King. "We love Microsoft Dynamics NAV... I wouldn't want to be in business without it. It has grown with us in just the way we wanted it to." Hall adds, "For us as IT professionals, it feels so good to be able to say yes to everything your business is asking us to provide for them. Our integrated ERP system gives us the flexibility to facilitate everything the company wants to accomplish. It lets us say yes to all the creative ideas instead of holding us back."



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