

## Seal of success for James Walker

**J**ames Walker manufactures a massive range of gaskets, seals and packings for a wide range of industries, and for everything from new build to MRO (maintenance repair and overhaul) applications. The firm has a large number of product families and immense attribute, size, material and performance ranges within each: what's more, they're being added to all the time.

As a result, the issue is managing massive and growing variety while providing fast, accurate customer service – including making and delivering on time, but also quoting accurately and fast. “Our customers run very expensive assets using our seals, and it's critical that we help them understand the components they need to get best value,” says Adrian Wakefield, business services director.

Its solutions: “Better planning and management, and better reporting of the status of processes and components in the supply chain... Our complexity is the spread: what's difficult for us is to recognise detailed capacity, to plan and schedule that optimally and then react to changes and events efficiently. Optimising tools, sequences and platens is best done at the local level, but feedback is vital. We're working on describing our tooling items in the same way as our SKUs – capturing and analysing tool and product attributes.”

It's an advanced sales configurator: “A big part of the business-winning process is about, do we already have a tool that can produce that item? If we do, we're half way to getting an order. Our quoting tools allow us to search for and select items in a structured manner, and because we've described the item in a standard sequence we can create it and price it, even if we haven't made one quite like it before.”

Wakefield makes the point that with half a million SKUs, bringing all the data and rules together on a fully featured Oracle database isn't trivial. But it's worth it, because it's not just about sales and production optimisation: James Walker is harnessing the project for electronic supply chain working – publishing data into an accessible repository for sales, distributors and potentially also bigger customers.

James Walker's sales front end is now live on some product ranges, and it's already proving successful in terms of speeding quoting and sales. And on the MRO side of the business, where there are more specials, being slick in quoting, and make-to-order, will mean huge competitive advantage. ■



### Key benefits

- Hugely speeded up quoting and sales processes
- No dupes or errors
- Huge advantage in growing, lucrative MRO business
- 24 x 7 global business support
- Cost-efficient, responsive make-to-order business

## A bumper harvest from your supply

**£**60m malt-maker Muntons in East Anglia went live with SAP, initially R/3 v4.6 but then mySAP.com, and in just a few months achieved full return on its sub-£1m investment. Indeed within one year it had saved more than £2m from debtor days improvements alone. And it's set to make even more returns with SAP's APO (advanced planner and optimiser).

Its project was initially prompted by a need for radical thinking in the face of crashing margins – and that led it to the view that it needed to link its suppliers and products much more seamlessly and automatically to customers and plants. That meant changing the corporate infrastructure and the IT.

“We had acquired plants and divisions around Europe, so we had several different systems, most of which were accounting systems and spreadsheets,” says Roger Barker, Muntons' finance director. “SAP wasn't even on the shortlist because we thought it would be too expensive, but we were told we should talk, and it turned out to be no more expensive than the competitors – and it had the supply chain optimiser.”

So SAP was selected with Logica as the implementation partner. Looking at the supply chain aspects, the system now handles raw material procurement, taking into account malt characteristics demanded by Muntons' customers. Since those are predetermined by barley attributes, the firm initially runs MRP against contract requirements to determine grain types, quantities and receipt dates. But since it can't dictate yields, qualities or times accurately, the system constantly reconciles the real and desired worlds, re-allocates and calculates appropriate pricing allowances on the fly.

Meanwhile, since sales contracts are still being negotiated during the harvest phase, the system also needs to reflect forecast, history and actual orders – potentially changing the stock purchasing requirements profile all the time. “Working with the system you soon find that real-time, accurate information is important. But then you know your raw materials accurately, which means you can plan production efficiently and accurately at the right site. That means you can despatch on-time, invoice same day and get paid more quickly.

Before SAP we were on 55.3 debtor days; now we're at 42 – which, for a £60m company, means £2m.”

He rightly wonders how many companies overlook this key measure, which wasn't in the project cost justification. And he says that massive saving also equates to around £100,000 less bank interest annually. ■



### Key benefits

- Saving of £2m by reducing debtor days
- £100,000 less bank interest annually
- Supply chain synchronisation saves £330,000 pa
- Despatch on-time, invoice same day
- Accurate dynamic raw materials costs
- More efficient production planning
- Considerable head count reduction