



CASE STUDY

AARON THOMAS COMPANY

Aaron Thomas Company is a full service contract packaging company providing specialist services from bundle wrapping to pouching, pallet displays and more. Customers span the food industry all the way from Fortune 500 companies to small and midsize businesses.

Industry:
Food & Beverage

Location:
Garden Grove, CA

Results



80% revenue growth



Tripled customer base without adding headcount



Mock recalls executed in 7 minutes flat



Implementation came in 20% under budget



As a fast-growing contract packaging company, Aaron Thomas Co. recognized that its customer relationships are a great competitive weapon. But to maintain such rapid growth, the status quo of legacy applications, paper and manual processes just weren't going to cut it anymore.

Aaron Thomas Company had one eye on securing its future growth and the other on maintaining its performance levels and quality.

This is something that has earned the company accolades such as “Contract Manufacturing Supplier of the Year” – and it is what drove Aaron Thomas Company to set out to find an ERP that could help solve some of its most pressing business challenges.

Packaging up quality, transparency and agility

Dealing with customers in highly regulated industries like food, nutraceuticals and pharmaceuticals, Aaron Thomas needs to track 100 percent of their inventory at all times. And as a contract packager, customers fully rely on them for centralized inventory visibility, quality controls and the traceability to perform recalls in a short period of time. To top it off, it was critical to find a new system that could be implemented quickly and scale with a quickly growing business.

Nicolas Jones, Operations Manager at Aaron Thomas sums it up: “From a quality perspective, we need to measure waste and recalls, and ensure quality checks are being performed on schedule and at the right points in the process. Using a mix of paper-based reporting and DOS systems that were not linked made this process time-consuming, inconsistent and costlier than necessary. And then there was the issue of reporting information back to clients.”

Unboxing the Plex Manufacturing Cloud

As with any successful contract packager, the connections Aaron Thomas makes with its customers are absolutely critical - reliable access to real-time information is mission critical. With the cloud ERP model, the web-based customer portal proved a competitive weapon, allowing customers to virtually run themselves while also freeing resources for Aaron Thomas. "It reduces the number of calls we get exponentially," says Aaron Bacon, sales and marketing representative for ATCO.

"Customer portals allow clients to manage their inventory offsite and do their ERP planning based on our inventories, production schedules and finished goods. They now have access [to] a majority of the information they would have once gotten from a sales rep directly through the system."

Quality and traceability also remain top priorities given the regulated industries Aaron Thomas' customers compete in. The ability to integrate quality check sheets into the production run was a top priority. FDA mandates also mean Aaron Thomas must meet with very short timelines to comply with any recalls requested by its customers. Tracking and traceability needed to be streamlined to be executed in a matter of minutes rather than days - no small feat

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Catching lightning in a bottle

Aaron Thomas ultimately implemented the Plex Manufacturing Cloud, coming in 20 percent under budget enabling complete real-time visibility into inventory, automating the quality control process, and providing customers with the transparency and self-service to continue to scale operations. Plus, employees can remotely manage the business across the three distributed plants whether in an airport, car or at a remote office.

Now, locating lost inventory is simple because every piece of information is tracked in Plex. What used to take hours, now takes minutes. And the company now has fully standardized quality control and compliance processes in the cloud. Users can instantly monitor which internal and external audits have been completed, when they were performed, and by whom.

And best of all, mock recalls can now be conducted in a mere 7 minutes with all documentation sent to a customer in under an hour – a process that previously took several people and several days.

Wrapping it all up

In moving to the Plex Manufacturing Cloud, Aaron Thomas has been able to achieve all their goals. The company's quality department has gone completely paperless with Plex and executes most of their work exclusively on tablets. Mock recalls now happen in a matter of minutes, and customers can access their information 24/7 from anywhere, allowing Aaron Thomas to handle three times as many customers without adding headcount.

Best of all, Plex gives Aaron Thomas room to grow well into the future. Cloud-based ERP is almost infinitely configurable, so it can constantly be conformed to a food and beverage manufacturer's evolving needs.

ABOUT PLEX

Plex Systems, Inc., a Rockwell Automation company, is the 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, Industrial IoT and analytics to connect people, systems, machines, and supply chains, enabling them to lead with precision, efficiency, and agility. Learn more at www.plex.com