



Solution Overview

INDUSTRY
Food Service

SCENARIO
AmeriKing's goal was to integrate their eEnterprise business software with Microsoft Great Plains Payroll to boost productivity, efficiency and employee morale by ensuring that 13,000 crew members were paid accurately and on time.

COMPANY PROFILE
AmeriKing, as the world's largest independent Burger King franchisee, had locations throughout the United States and employs over 13,000 crew members.

SOLUTION
It used to take 200 hours to enter the payroll information every week at headquarters and created the potential for delays if the job wasn't completed on time. Instead, the company took advantage of the powerful integration tools and payroll functionality offered by Microsoft Great Plains eEnterprise to eliminate nearly all of that work.

SOFTWARE USED
Microsoft Great Plains eEnterprise
Financial Series
Distribution Series
Payroll Series
Customization and Integration Series
eExpense
Enterprise Reporting Series
Microsoft SQL Server

AmeriKing

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LANAC Technology, a solutions integrator based in Chicago, developed a routine that automatically polls each location and uploads the hours worked. "Our crew members are the critical force behind our success," said Hernando Manrique, Chief Information Officer of AmeriKing. "If one of them gets paid a day or two late or less than they deserve because of an error, we might lose them. Integrating our BOS with our Business Applications has greatly reduced the possibility of that happening."

Based in Westchester, Illinois, AmeriKing is the largest independent Burger King franchisee in the United States with 376 restaurants located primarily in twelve Midwestern and Southern states. The company was formed in 1994 by a group consisting of independent Burger King franchisees and former Burger King Corporation executives. AmeriKing Corporation owns and operates 376 restaurants in Illinois, Indiana, Texas, Colorado, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia,



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***Hernando Manrique
Chief Information Officer***

North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and Michigan. “We started in 1994 with 68 stores, grew to 121 in the same year and recently reached our present total,” Manrique said. “For the next few years we will focus on maximizing the quality of both the customer and the employee experience.”

Implementing new business software

A number of years ago the company selected Microsoft Great Plains eEnterprise business software after considering all the leading mid-market products. The decision came down to the fact that the selection team liked eEnterprise’s user interface and reporting tools better. The accounting staff also felt the user interface was easier to work with and liked the FRx financial reporting module in eEnterprise, which uses a spreadsheet-like interface and powerful row, column and reporting tree building blocks that make it easy to construct new reports and shed new light on a company’s financial picture. The information technology staff also liked the software’s powerful customization tools.

With the new business software installed, the company turned its attention to the problem of obtaining timely operating information from its many restaurant locations. The biggest challenge in the past was the need to obtain hours worked from each of its employees. A number of years back, the company installed a BOS that incorporates a time clock and collects the hours worked by each employee. The employee data is uploaded to a database located at headquarters along with sales data. In the past, a large amount of time was required to input the detailed information into the payroll system. With manual data input, there was always the possibility of data entered incorrectly. “Many of our crew members depend on receiving their pay on the day that it is expected,” Manrique said. “If we are a day or two late they may be disappointed. The fast food industry as a whole is known for high turnover and we wanted to ensure that our payroll practices were not contributing to it.”

Integrating hours worked information

Patti Cahanin, Business Applications Manager at AmeriKing, worked with the solutions integrator that originally installed the eEnterprise system to devise a solution. “The eEnterprise Integration Manager module

makes it quite easy to integrate data from virtually any database or desktop application,” said Ernie Redfern, Chief Operating Officer of LANAC. “The process of integrating the payroll information took just a few days. We wrote a program within the BOS that exports a text file containing the hours worked information. We just had to install the new module and create templates using drag and drop tools to map fields from the BOS uploaded files to the Business Applications.” To verify the accuracy and integrity of external data, Integration Manager encapsulates eEnterprise business logic within a series of business objects. All external data is processed through these business objects, ensuring that only data that meets eEnterprise-processing criteria will be committed to the database. Unlike database-level integrations that are susceptible to changes in table structure during a product upgrade, integrations defined through Integration Manager will continue to work with each product release.

The new integration routine works as follows, said Cahanin. Every time a crew member comes in to work or leaves, they punch in or out of the ReMACS BOS from Radiant Systems, Atlanta, Georgia, using a unique code. The BOS summarizes the hours worked for each employee and generates a report that managers can review anytime they wish. Once every week, the BOS generates a file and dials into a server at headquarters and deposits it into a directory where it can be accessed by Integration Manager. Later, an accountant simply pushes a button to import all of the hours worked and other employee data for the entire week. The accountant then makes a quick check of the information and is ready to start generating the payroll. The time savings are enormous and, even more important, each of the crew members is assured of being paid accurately and on time.

Integrating complicated invoices

The success of this application encouraged AmeriKing to automate another tedious manual operation. The company deals with a few key national vendors that deliver food and supplies throughout its network of restaurants. These vendors provide a single invoice to the company with an enormous number of line items that used to have to be entered into the accounting system in order to generate profit and loss statements for each restaurant. In the past, tens of thousands of entries had to be made every month. Redfern said that the task of integrating these invoices took less than a

day using exactly the same methods that were used to integrate the payroll hours. The vendor codes, which indicate the type of item such as a napkin or ground beef, are converted into the appropriate account number, making it possible to disburse each line item to the appropriate cost center. Now, accountants can press a single button to automatically update the business software with the full detail of their most complicated invoices. LANAC also created another application that imports other information from the BOS such as sales figures, nonfood purchases, inventory, advertising expenses and petty cash for each store.

Because of its large number of employees, speed of payroll processing is also an important issue for AmeriKing. The company has recently moved to the latest eEnterprise release and experienced substantial performance improvements, reducing build time by about 50%. Just as important, the company ran a series of benchmarks using both double and triple its current number of employees that indicated the program should easily be able to scale to handle future growth plans. The new release addresses customer-driven enhancements in the areas of e-business, sales and purchasing, and multinational and international capabilities.

Improved reporting capabilities

“We have made substantial improvements since we began implementing the new business software,” Manrique and Cahanin concluded. “The biggest win was integrating payroll information from our stores which has helped to ensure a positive experience for our crew members while saving hundreds of hours of time. Beyond that, we have integrated other data from our BOS and vendors and have substantially improved our reporting capabilities. Our next step will be to implement the new eEnterprise travel and expense module which will save time and money by allowing our managers to enter their expense reports over the Internet.”

**For every business
problem there is a
Microsoft Great Plains
Business Solution.**