

BIG SKY FARMS

Solution Overview

Industry

Agriculture

Situation

Big Sky Farms needed to integrate a full financial, human resources and payroll package to replace a current system that was outdated and could not scale to satisfy the business requirements.

Business Profile

Big Sky Farms is a Saskatchewan-based pork producer that has grown 800 percent since its inception in 1995.

Results

Microsoft Business Solutions allowed Big Sky Farms to increase operating efficiencies and reduce the cost structure in its financial department. Payroll cheques for 300 employees are now done in house with ease, and payroll processing time has been cut by at least half. Overall, Big Sky Farms has reduced month end by 15 days, and more than doubled its number of transactions.

Software Used

Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains

- Financials
- Inventory and Order Processing
- Human Resource Management

Microsoft Windows® 2000 Server
Microsoft Windows 2000

To accommodate a rapidly-growing business, Big Sky Farms needed to upgrade its financial system. Using a wide range of Microsoft Business Solutions products, the company is prepared to continue its exponential growth.

Big Sky Farms Inc. (Big Sky) was founded in 1995 with the construction of a three-site 2,500 sow hog facility. Within six years, Big Sky has expanded to twenty-eight locations in Saskatchewan, Canada, with a corporate vision to market 2 million hogs by 2008. Since its inception, the company's production has multiplied eight-fold, with annual revenues of \$60 million and 3,000 customers. A firm commitment to Saskatchewan is an integral part of the Big Sky philosophy. The company was founded, and continues to be managed, by four Saskatchewan businessmen who together have more than 60 years experience in the industry.

Big Sky was referred to the Microsoft Business Solutions solution by reselling partner Deloitte & Touche. They were using an off-the-shelf accounting package for years, but it was time for a more robust and reliable system. Microsoft® Business Solutions—Great Plains® was a perfect fit for Big Sky for a number of reasons: it was affordable, offered significant scalability and service availability, and met all the functional needs of the company.

An Integrated Solution

Big Sky needed an integrated financial, payroll and human resource solution that would meet its needs as a rapidly growing company. As the company grew, its software solutions became outdated and cumbersome. While separate packages for accounting, financial and payroll suited the organization before, the rapid growth of the company necessitated an all-encompassing solution that cut costs and streamlined processes.

"We outgrew our old system," says Lorianne Earis, Controller for Big Sky. "We needed an integrated solution."

"Our operation is very focused on cost," Earis says. "We have a limited number of customers (packing plants), but over 3,000 vendors. The key to success is controlling costs and managing commodity price risk."

Big Sky needed to ensure that its new solution would allow for significant increases in transaction volume and provide adequate information for decision making.

As a Microsoft Business Solutions reselling partner, Deloitte & Touche worked to help manage the implementation of Big Sky's new solution.

The key element in the implementation was the Canadian Payroll module, which helps small and medium-size businesses streamline their payroll processes and gain greater control over their information. Deloitte & Touche helped Big Sky to properly train staff on payroll, and offered support and solutions as the implementation proceeded.

Complete Implementation in Less Than Three Months

The solution was implemented in a number of steps. Because of the nature of the business, the modules were customized regularly to ensure full manageability. The overall implementation was completed in less than three months.

Once staff were fully trained on payroll procedures, and the service and support through the go-live process was available, financial process improved greatly.

Payroll Processing Time Cut in Half

The implementation has enabled Big Sky to fully integrate its payroll with its financial accounting system, resulting in a significant increase in efficiency. Payroll cheques for 300 employees are now done in house with ease, and payroll processing time has been cut in half without sacrificing scalability options as the company grows. Overall, Big Sky has reduced month end by 15 days and doubled its number of transactions. "The program itself was very user friendly and easy to explore," Earis says. "It definitely improved efficiency of payroll and allowed us to grow."

The Ideal Solution for a Rapidly-Growing Business

Big Sky has been running live with Microsoft Business Solutions for more than two years. Since the implementation, the cost of administration has increased marginally in relation to the company's rapid growth. Additionally, reporting capabilities have significantly improved. The company now has a solid, integrated system that can handle all of its financial applications and adapt to changes in the business, positioning the company to continue its growth without sacrificing operating efficiencies.

For more information about Microsoft Business Solutions, visit www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions

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