



Case Study: **EVANS FOOD GROUP**

ULTRA
CONSULTANTS

About Evans Food Group

Evans Food Group Ltd., a Benestar Brands company, is a global producer of branded and private-label packaged pork rinds snacks. Founded in 1932, the Chicago-based company has grown into the world's largest producer of pork rinds.

The company's products include pork skins, cracklins, chicharrones and other Hispanic snack foods. Evans Food Group serves distributors, retailers and ethnic food companies in more than a dozen countries in North America, Latin America and Asia. The company has five manufacturing operations in the United States and one in Saltillo, Mexico. Benestar's brand portfolio includes Mac's, Turkey Creek, PÖRQ, Chicas Chips, Don Rudy, Cazo de Oro and Domingo's.

Pork Rinds Producer Streamlines Operations, Enables Fast Growth

Like many long-established food product manufacturers, Evans Food Group struggled to manage its operations using multiple legacy enterprise systems, outdated software and unstandardized, inefficient processes. The company reached a point where it was nearly impossible to expand its operations and grow through acquisitions unless it solved its business process challenges and implemented an ERP solution that suited the food business, the organization and the company's requirements.

Evans had tried to solve its growth challenges through ERP before, without success. And by the time it engaged Ultra Consultants, it was ready to try again, and overdue for an upgrade.

PROJECT DRIVERS



Enhance Recall & Traceability



Gain Ability to Scale



Improve Data Access



Remove Manual Data Entry



Gain a Single Version of the Truth



Improve Production Planning



Standardize IT Systems

Challenges Create Opportunity

Ultra began the project with a close look at the company's business processes and requirements – and found a number of challenges:

Maintaining recall and traceability capabilities

– While the company always had been strong in this essential capability, it recognized the value of making investments to maintain compliance and quality, and to stay on the cutting edge of food safety.

Providing access to reliable data

– Food producers (like all manufacturers) need a single, dependable version of the truth. But different Evans facilities were using different methods to measure performance, analyze the impact of changes and generate reports – methods that included inefficient manual processes. Management knew it needed better access and more accurate data to help them make fast, informed decisions.

Standardizing business processes

– Along with the need for better and more accessible data, the company also needed to standardize business processes across all locations, and to be able to access and report data

within the same system. The goal was to streamline best practices and initiate common, standardized processes across all business locations.

Enabling growth – While Evans currently is the largest manufacturer of its kind in the United States, management wanted a solution that would provide a foundation for growth and future acquisitions.

Eliminating inefficiencies – Process inefficiencies were widespread in key processes, particularly in production scheduling and financial reporting, where there was significant duplication of effort and a heavy reliance on manual data entry.

Improving production planning – The company typically planned production around flavor clean-out (such as the change from regular to BBQ), but plans were complicated by time-consuming changeovers on the bagging machines. Calculating the most efficient way of producing the required combinations of flavor and bag size was overwhelming. Evans needed a system that could juggle competing priorities and maximize productivity and throughput.

Unique Needs, Unique Solution

Ultra and Evans elected to deploy the new solution to the entire company, across all locations, in one release.

To ensure the future solution satisfied the business requirements of all locations and processes, a project team of business process leads was created, with accountability across the enterprise. In addition, a super-user structure was implemented to reduce implementation risk and lock-in future state process maturity.

With Ultra's guidance, the project team identified and selected an ERP vendor with the extensive industry-specific experience Evans needed, and a solution with out-of-the-box functionality it required. What's more, the ERP vendor offered to build customized functionalities for Evans, including a more advanced yield reporting process.

The solution to the company's production planning challenges turned out to be features already part of the core software. Allergen management and auto-prioritization features were a perfect fit for the kind of multivariate decision-making the company engages in daily. And the team simplified its scheduling process with built-in features from the ERP solution.

Expertise Informs Process

To solve the specific challenges Evans was facing, it was important that Ultra thoroughly understood the food processing industry, the company and its processes. And Ultra's deep expertise and long experience in food process proved advantageous throughout the business process improvement, software selection and solution implementation phases of the project.



“We knew that we needed an organization that understood the challenges growing food processors deal with every day,” said Evans Operations Manager David Sparesus. “Ultra’s experience was invaluable to us.”

With knowledgeable experts on the project, Ultra was able to quickly understand, analyze and map core processes, assess the current state of processes, apply best practices and collaborate to define a high-value future state solution. This insight reduced the effort and time required to reach workable process designs.

In addition, by documenting the current and future states, and implementing improved business processes, Ultra gave Evans a repeatable blueprint for continuous improvement and, most important, a standardized, pre-defined approach as the company acquires new business units.

“Working with Ultra Consultants on this ERP project placed us in an improved strategic position as we continue to

grow within – and beyond – our pork rind industry,” said Evans CFO Craig Leese. “Acquisitions are coming online with unprecedented short timelines. We’re impressed.”

Acquisitions Drive Upgrade

In fact, Evans had just finished its complex – and successful – Ultra-managed ERP transformation when the company experienced major changes.

First, the company acquired Gaytan Foods, a City of Industry, Calif.-based manufacturer of chicharrónes (pork rinds) and other Hispanic snack foods. And then, a year-and-a-half later, acquired Turkey Creek Inc., a Thomaston, Ga.-based maker of pork rinds.

To maximize the value of these growth acquisitions, the ERP solution was upgraded to bring the entire organization under a common set of processes and systems – and create a foundation for easy integration of future acquisitions.

BENEFITS OF NEW PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

Evans Food Group reaped a number of important benefits from its new ERP solution and business process optimization efforts.

70%

improvement
in inventory
tracking

50%

faster production
reporting with
improved data
visibility and
data access

50%

reduction in
onboarding
timeframes for
acquisitions

50%

time savings
accessing data,
especially recall
info and product
history

50%

reduction in
manual
processing



Experience Enables Speed

“We led Evans through an implementation of a new ERP solution.” said Joe Velez, Service Delivery Manager for Ultra Consultants. “After they went live, we continued to work with them to achieve the value proposition – the future state – defined in our business process improvement process.”

“Our post-implementation partnership with Evans strengthened its business,” Velez continued. “We provided much-needed stabilization and tactical support, and set the stage for future strategic growth.”

In 2018, Evans tapped Ultra to assist in their due diligence for the prospective acquisition of Gaytan Foods – and then selected Ultra to lead the integration of Gaytan Foods into the enterprise ERP solution.

From the close of the deal to go-live, the project, which included requirements, design, process improvement, implementation and integration, took only nine months. “That’s unheard-of for a major acquisition with a significant national footprint,” Velez said. “Our success with the Gaytan Foods project prompted Evans to have us do it again in 2019 with Turkey Creek.”

“ Working with Ultra Consultants on this ERP project placed us in an improved strategic position as we continue to grow. ”

- Craig Leese
CFO
Evans Food Group

Ultra's experience, track record and trusted advisor status paid off on the Turkey Creek project: Velez and the implementation team were able to expand the enterprise solution to Turkey Creek in just 16 weeks.

"Ultra was able to rapidly add two significant acquisitions to our existing business footprint," said Steve Defenbaugh, Evans Food Group's Director of Information Technology. "Both were completed successfully on accelerated timelines, which allowed us to grow our business with minimal disruption to information systems and business flows."

In August 2019, Evans Food Group itself was acquired by Benestar Brands.

Strong Relationship Continues

Ultra's relationship with Evans continues under Benestar with critical support for the company's business systems and ERP strategy.

"We trust Ultra Consultants to help us with ERP growth challenges and with the improvement of our core business processes," Defenbaugh added, "and we will be pleased to involve Ultra in future growth plans and improvements to our ERP solution."

WHY ULTRA?

When you need to bring in outside resources, it's critically important to choose an ERP consulting partner with a formal, proven ERP project methodology. In addition, you will want to work with a firm that is flexible and able to adapt its methodology to meet your company's unique needs.

For more than 27 years, Ultra Consultants has utilized its proven methodology, ERP expertise and industry knowledge to deliver measurable business performance improvements to manufacturers and distributors in virtually every vertical.

- Our services are built for your industry. **We understand your processes and requirements.**
- Our solutions leverage our expertise. **We help you choose software to meet your unique needs.**
- Our results reflect our ERP experience. **We maximize benefits and minimize risk – and deliver success.**



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