

PEAK'S SAP PRINTING SOLUTION PROVIDES FRESH RESULTS FOR MANUFACTURER OF SPECIALTY BAKERY PRODUCTS



Application Summary

CUSTOMER: Chef Solutions

INDUSTRY: Prepared Foods and Specialty Bakery Products

APPLICATION: SAP Bar Code Label Printing

BENEFITS: High-level accuracy, Real-time data, Near-elimination of key entry



Retail grocers and food services companies looking for fresh prepared foods and bakery products to augment their product lines need to look no farther than Chef Solutions Inc. The Schaumburg, Illinois-based company offers everything from pastries to potato salad through its various divisions scattered throughout the U.S. This leading provider of prepared foods and specialty bakery products and solutions to the retail and food service industries produces more than 5,000 different prepared food and bakery items, both branded and private label. Products include protein, pasta and vegetable salads, side dishes, sandwiches, desserts, frozen dough, cookies, croissants, muffins and donut mixes.



A Smooth Mixture of Ingredients

While the product mix is a successful one for Chef Solutions, the company was challenged to select the right information system when it combined six companies into one. It needed one robust solution that could track its various items, from raw materials to finished goods, which often traveled through several divisions before reaching their final destination. With the wide assortment of product offerings, it also needed a printing solution that could easily grab the precise information needed from a centralized system to produce labels whenever and wherever they were required.

When Chef Solutions brought six companies – Orval Kent, I&K, Ozark Salad Company, Landau Foods, Pennant Foods and La Francaise Bakery – under one banner, company executives knew the way to provide the best service possible and attain consistency in operations was to install a feature-rich enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that provided real-time data for all 11 facilities nationwide.

Recipe for Success

Chef Solutions decided to implement an SAP solution and wanted to include the ability to print directly out of SAP. Because this is a complex task, Chef Solution's IT personnel turned to PEAK Technologies and its ERP division to integrate bar coding with enterprise applications.

The labeling system that Chef Solutions was using consisted of stand-alone printers that applied labels to boxes. There was no integration. Chef Solutions needed the ability to print labels that contained information from SAP including part numbers and batch numbers. The company also needed this information to be consistent across all of their locations.

In order to create a system that would meet all of Chef Solution's specific goals, PEAK worked with the customer closely to ask the right questions and determine exactly what the company was looking for out of a printing and information integration system. As Chef Solutions discussed their needs, it became evident to them that the project was more than a "plug in the printer and print" project.

Serving Up Solutions

When the food preparer realized the project was more complicated than it originally thought, it brought PEAK deeper into the project. The integrator became the solutions provider, consulting on the SAP printing side, performing visits to all Chef Solutions sites to determine where the company could print documents and labels, as well as providing the hardware, software, cabling, media, installation, training and maintenance for the application.

Given the complex nature of the multi-facility application, site visits were essential. Surveyors thoroughly analyzed the needs at each facility, getting to know the ebb and flow of the work. They discovered, for example, that there was a lot of internal movement within the facilities and among facilities. They also took stock of everything currently in place that might be usable with the new application.

PEAK'S SAP PRINTING SOLUTION PROVIDES FRESH APPROACH FOR MAJOR PROVIDER OF SPECIALTY BAKERY PRODUCTS

The client wanted to be able to control the label formats from a centralized location using a WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) tool and still be able to grab variable information from SAP and develop that into labels. Zebra's BAR-ONE label format software allows users to do just that.

After careful analysis, and a pilot project at Chef Solutions' corporate headquarters in Schaumburg, Ill., PEAK began site evaluations so they could recommend the best suited equipment and label material. PEAK also began the creation of the printer cable infrastructure, followed by the installation of more than 60 printers. The goal was to have the facilities brought online in three phases during April, June, and August of 2003.

Sixty Printers, One Powerful System

The new network uses approximately 60 printers throughout the facilities for receipt of raw materials, and labeling during production and shipping—all capable of accepting commands from the SAP system. Most of Chef Solutions' operations use Zebra's all-metal direct thermal or thermal transfer 105SL printers to create 4- by 6-inch paper labels. Facilities with automated print-and-apply operations use Zebra PAX print engines. The PAX engines share the same ZPL II printer control language as the 105SLs, enabling multiple printer model ease of use without additional programming.



The initial transaction of notifying the system when raw materials are received triggers the printing of the label that holds a material number (part number, description, batch number, expiration date and bar code). When material is put away or otherwise moved, the transaction is noted by scanning the label.

Raw materials are picked for production when a work order is generated by the SAP system. The labels are scanned to record dispatch, and the materials are sent to production. The finished goods are produced from those raw materials and, when they are received from production, a new label is printed containing the same information.

A PEAK technician set up the BAR-ONE software, trained Chef Solutions workers how to use the software tool, and set up the tables that allowed Chef to link the bar codes, text and graphic fields to SAP database fields and system variables.

Fresh Data, Productivity Rises

With its centralized system in place, Chef Solutions is realizing benefits from high-level accuracy to up-to-the-minute data information, to near-elimination of key entry. Some facilities use wireless terminals to record movements. Some use print and apply systems. It all works together seamlessly to keep the lines and the products moving, and keep everyone in the loop.

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