



VINTAGE NURSERIES

SAP® BUSINESS ONE PROVIDES
DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS IN SALES
AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

“Implementing SAP Business One was really a beneficial change for us. Our old system was painfully slow. Now we’re getting more accurate information more quickly, and that lets us make more timely decisions.”

Mark Weighall, Controller, Vintage Nurseries LLC

QUICK FACTS

Company

- Name: Vintage Nurseries LLC
- Location: Wasco, California
- Industry: Mill products
- Products and services: Grapevine rootstock and grafts
- Revenue: About US\$10 million
- Employees: 25
- Web site: www.vintagenurseries.com
- Implementation partner: Apollo Consulting LLC

Challenges and Opportunities

- Improve ability to manage a vastly increased customer base
- Enable easy access to data

Objectives

- Replace inflexible, unreliable business software with robust application
- Ensure data accuracy; improve reporting capabilities
- Translate data into usable information

SAP® Solution and Services

SAP® Business One application

Implementation Highlights

- Implemented software in 3 months
- Ran existing systems and SAP Business One in parallel during implementation

Why SAP

- Best fit for business model right out of the box
- Support for accurate and quick reporting
- Ability to grow with business; continual support

Benefits

- New levels of data accuracy
- New insights into business processes
- Ability to provide previously unavailable management reports very quickly
- Heightened visibility into new sales opportunities

Existing Environment

- Sage AccPac General Ledger software
- Business Objects Crystal Report software

Third-Party Integration

Operating system: Microsoft Windows



“Our customer base has changed over the past seven or eight years,” says Mark Weighall, controller at Vintage Nurseries, headquartered in Wasco, California. “Our business used to comprise two or three dozen customers who made up 50% to 60% of our business. Now 80% of our business comes from 600 to 800 customers.”

That change in customer base imposed new burdens on the company’s existing IT solution. Vintage needed more comprehensive and more accurate data – and it had to be able to translate that data into usable, actionable information. The company met its new information requirements by moving to the SAP® Business One application.

Grape Success

Vintage is North America’s largest grapevine nursery. The company provides grapevines to commercial grape growers. Founded nearly two decades ago by two college students, it has evolved into a thriving business with 25 employees and revenues exceeding US\$10 million.

It is not uncommon for a growing enterprise to reach a pivotal point where its existing business processes and information technology become insufficient to support current and future needs. Weighall describes the symptoms. “We had problems with the way the inventory manager was interacting with our AccPac system. There were issues with data integrity. Then, our accounting system went down for a month, and we couldn’t get any information. That was pretty much the last straw. We decided we simply couldn’t operate like this any more

if we were going to be in business for the long term and perform efficiently and profitably.”

Best Fit

Vintage scoured the marketplace looking for the right software to accommodate its perceived requirements. “We looked

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at two Microsoft packages and at something called Cougar Mountain software. We also looked at an application from Epicor,” recalls Weighall. “Given our business needs versus cost-effectiveness and how well things would work for us out of the box, we decided SAP Business One gave us the best fit.”

There were other considerations as well. Data accuracy was critical. Vintage managers also liked the automated reporting capabilities supported by SAP Business One. The application would allow them to spend more time managing the business instead of creating reports,

especially since internal e-mail could be automated when using the Microsoft Excel-based XL Reporter tool. “It’s a very labor intensive business – farm labor really,” says Peter Kavanagh of Apollo Consulting LLC, an SAP partner based in San Francisco, who then adds, “The broad challenge was to put a technical solution in place in a business that’s fundamentally agricultural.”

With the help of Apollo, Vintage implemented SAP Business One in three months. Following Weighall’s advice, the company ran the application in parallel with its legacy system while it trained employees on the new software.

“That’s the safest way to do it and make sure everything gets buttoned down,” says Weighall.

New Visibility

Running in parallel provided other insights as well. In particular, the approach revealed flaws in the company’s business processes and internal controls. “It was really interesting to find out that we were basically operating on trust and hoping that people didn’t make mistakes when invoicing customers, for example,” says Weighall. The software now helps Vintage avoid those kinds of situations.



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“SAP Business One integrates processes, so if you segregate activities among different employees, you can see quickly and clearly who is clicking what buttons on what screens. It was really easy to find out where the mistakes were being made and correct them.” SAP Business One provided the secure and real-time visibility Vintage needed to support its rapidly growing operations.

Immediate Benefits

SAP Business One benefits began appearing almost immediately after go-live. “One of the managers walked into my office and asked me for a specific report,” Weighall says. “With the old software it would have taken months – if I could have provided it at all. With SAP Business One, I handed it to him in less than 10 minutes.”

While Weighall is seeing productivity gains throughout the company, he is especially aware of improvements in his own office. “I no longer have to spend an hour trying to gather information just to compile it to make a report,” he says. “As an example, it used to take our sales people hours or days to compile reports and get them out. Now I can provide exactly the information each salesperson needs and in the format he or she wants. I can click a button, and SAP Business One runs the reports in a matter of minutes.”

There are multiple facets to this new reporting capability. “Vintage always made a profit,” says Kavanagh. “But the company wanted to get some more granu-

larity so it could see exactly where its cost base was. And now it has started to see that.”

New Opportunities

With the new software in place, Weighall can turn his attention on growing the company. For example, he has integrated output from a geographical information system (GIS) with data from the SAP Business One application to determine where Vintage has additional sales opportunities. By correlating U.S. Department of Agriculture data with GIS data to see where all the vineyards are located, Vintage can relate that information to its sales data to see, by zip code or county, where it’s selling plants. “There are 40,000 acres of vineyards up in Sonoma County where we’ve made no sales in the last two years,” Weighall notes. And then, with some urgency, he adds, “We have to get somebody up there.”

By having the ability to generate reports quickly in real time, Vintage can determine the demands of the industry and what part of the market share it should target – enabling the company to create a profitable niche market for its products.

Clearly, SAP Business One will be paying for itself in short order.



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