



THE WEBMETHODS PRODUCT SUITE DRIVES DEAN FOODS' DEMAND-DRIVEN INITIATIVES

Challenge

Over the years, Dean Foods acquired several new businesses which operate as independent business units. As a result, Dean Foods had inconsistent data across its business units for the same products and a lengthy process to find and validate the data that customers needed. Tracking product formulas for all flavors within business units created inaccuracies and complexity that slowed the item maintenance process.

Solution

Dean Foods decided to leverage the webMethods product suite to create a Master Item Synchronization Process that ensured consistent data use across multiple business units and customers; a process that adhered to industry and customer mandates for information and involved end-users from different functional areas of the business.

Benefits

Dean Foods now has the ability to get the right data to the right place at the right time. The company has increased data accuracy and reduced the overhead normally required to manage data complexity and handle exceptions. It gains the advantages of integration while maintaining the benefits of using "best of breed" applications.



Dean Foods is one of the leading food and beverage companies in the USA, and the largest processor and distributor of milk and other dairy products. It is also the nation's leading manufacturer of soy milk, organic milk and other organic foods. Through its WhiteWave Foods Company, it offers a variety of nationally branded products, such as Silk soy milk, Horizon Organic dairy products, International Delight coffee creamers, LAND O'LAKES creamers and fluid dairy products. Dean Foods operates more than 110 plants in the United States and Spain.

Get there faster.™

“Implementing an enterprise-wide process has changed the culture of the company to work together to serve the needs of the customer. Customers can understand and purchase from us in a timely manner, and have the ability to react to what we are sending them in a more efficient way.”

Keith Markbreiter | Manager, Business Process Integration | Dean Foods

Right people, right information, right time

Dean Foods looked to the webMethods product suite to help address two key challenges so that the right people could have the right information at the right time.

As a result of company acquisitions, Dean Foods acquired a challenging number of new and inconsistent SKUs and UPC codes. There was inconsistent data between business units for the same products and a lengthy process to find and validate the data that customers needed.

Dean also needed to simplify and homogenize complex product information. There were multiple levels of descriptions for the same product, and tracking product formulas for all flavors within business units created inaccuracies and complexity that slowed the item maintenance process.

Demand-driven process improvements

“Dean Foods saw the same need to respond to demand-driven process improvements as everybody else in the industry,” says Keith Markbreiter, Manager, Business Process Integration, Dean Foods. “There is a lot of data out there in our companies and the question is how do we leverage that data? How do we make it work for us and for our customers? The webMethods solution provides end-to-end integration of information, plus simplified EDI transactions and related processes via EDIINT/AS2.”

With the webMethods solution, end-users from different functional areas of the business would be involved in item setup and maintenance activities to validate data accuracy. webMethods Business Process Management (BPM) workflow and portal bring together end-users from different areas of the business to support best practices and ensure visibility and accuracy of item information. No one individual owns the product data but everyone has a part in ensuring consistency and accuracy.

Dean Foods employed the use of a webMethods item canonical to describe products used by different business units and customers. Their ability to achieve consistency and accuracy with product information across the company and with customers has been largely driven by their commitment and adoption of a single process leveraging a single item canonical.

“We have just very recently recognized the need to include different centers of expertise within our company to work together and join together as a single process beyond even the autonomy of the individual dairies to manage product data as an asset for the company,” said Markbreiter.

Enterprise-wide results

Dean Foods has integrated end-users across 32 independent business units into the new enterprise-wide process. webMethods aggregated data from different sources and applications into a single repository, then distributed the data across multiple business units and customers. “This had the greatest impact on our ability to get the right data to the right place at the right time,” says Markbreiter.

The new process automatically checks records to assure that they’re valid and in synchronization with other regions, enabling Dean to reduce the overhead normally required to manage data complexity and handle exceptions.

According to Markbreiter, webMethods BPM human workflow has been the single biggest differentiator for Dean Foods because they have many different touch points, source, and targets for the data. In order to automate the process, human interaction is needed, while at the same time making sure there are no disconnects.

“Being able to allow your users to have the say, the voice, the flexibility of where they can interact with that information, and collaborate as part of that process is key,” mentioned Markbreiter.

We’ve got better tools now such as webMethods BPM to allow us to do that. When you tie that into the existing best practices of your company, you become a center of excellence for managing data across your organization and customers. This is how we’ve been successful.”

With the webMethods solution, Dean Foods has been able to:

- Efficiently manage 35,000 products in nine categories, with 200 new products launched each year
- Support 360,000 customer and partner locations where Dean Foods delivers products
- Reduce time from five days to one day for each item introduced
- Save \$60,000 per year in VAN transaction fees

KEY COMPONENTS

webMethods Product Suite

The webMethods product suite provides Dean Foods with EDI integration capabilities and the ability to automate and improve business processes.

ABOUT SOFTWARE AG

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Our industry-leading product portfolio includes best-in-class solutions for managing data, enabling service-oriented architecture, and improving business processes. By combining proven technology with industry expertise and best practices, our customers improve and differentiate their businesses – faster.

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