



East Anglia Federal Co-operative Society (EAFCS) streamlines the management of its merchandise with ab-initio.

The combined turnover of the societies' food retail business is £250 million, employing 3,000 staff across their food businesses, the EAFCS has an improvement and modernisation programme for their existing retail stores running alongside an acquisition and development programme. The time had come for the EAFCS to replace their existing retail head office management systems.

#### The challenge:

- To replace the existing retail head office systems, which are limited in functionality and duplicate processes across the businesses.
- Both Colchester and Ipswich & Norwich societies were using Trader (a bureau-based system), that had limitations including, access, rigid price bands and ranging that was by store group rather than store specific.
- As each society ran its own system, common product related data from Co-operative Trading Group (CRTG) was updated and replicated across each system.

#### Our solution:

- One fully integrated centralised operational system phased in across the business – from headoffice to point-of-sale, from warehouse to web – operating in true real-time.

#### The results:

- Ease of integration with other applications.
- Establishing control and accuracy.
- Flexibility with a user friendly interface.
- Unified database bringing information across the business together with one holistic view from EPOS to warehouse.
- Hitting implementation goals.
- Robust application "The results of our investment in ab-initio will be enhanced customer service and profitability." John Dixey, Systems Manager, EAFCS.

## The challenge:

EAFCS was set up in 1983 by three local co-operative societies to carry out the procurement and distribution of supplies for their food stores. EAFCS and the three individual societies also work together within the national Co-operative Retail Trading Group (CRTG). With 126 outlets ranging in size from village shops to superstores, and an increasing emphasis on local and neighbourhood stores servicing their customers, EAFCS and its member societies needed a retail management system to support mounting business complexity.

With the increasing complexity of the business, the three societies sought to replace the existing retail head office systems, which were limited in functionality and duplicated processes across the businesses. Both Colchester and Ipswich & Norwich societies were using Trader, a bureau-based system. Chelmsford were using the head office element of their own EPoS system.

The new system needed to work alongside the warehouse system, but remove duplication. It needed to provide sophisticated product, price and stock management, while optimising ranges in store. Finally, it needed to integrate with EAFCS's AS400-based business applications and the Societies' EPoS and financial systems.

## The solution:

A clear set of business objectives simplified the quest for a replacement system. It needed to work alongside their warehouse system, chainstores, and remove administrative duplication. It needed to provide sophisticated product, price, and stock management, while optimising ranges in store. Finally, it needed to integrate with EAFCS's AS400-based business applications and the Societies' EPoS and financial systems.

Networking within the retail industry as well as researching other complimentary system providers led to the selection of Celtech. Celtech provided a clear understanding of both the strategic and operational retail issues. This insight and the functionality of ab-initio provided a robust head office solution, combining sophisticated functionality with a user-friendly interface and navigation system.

The single, unified product database, which takes product and price related data from CRTG, has eliminated the heavy burden of administrative duplication.

ab-initio reduces the number of items failing to scan at the checkout, this significantly improves the customer experience. When combined with an improved range control that ensures each store is profiled correctly and pricing/promotions have the flexibility required, the member and customer loyalty is rewarded.

The value of ab-initio's unified product database is also illustrated by the close integration it brings to warehouse and retail-related data, which has significantly reduced the occurrence of items failing to scan at point-of-sale.

Built upon the bedrock of the product database, ab-initio's sophisticated catalogue management has provided the necessary controls and flexibility required to underpin store specific product ranging and pricing strategies.

"ab-initio's store specific ranging and product management gives us the infrastructure and solid foundations to support inventory management and suggested ordering in our stores. Combined with ab-initio's flexible pricing mechanisms, it grants us capabilities to satisfy the needs of our membership and customers, in-turn building loyalty. I am confident that ab-initio's flexibility will support our future business strategies." John Dixey, Systems Manager, EAFCS