Harnessing the power of the IT team

Dave Jackson, director of IT and CIO, Welch Foods, Inc.

Mark Richard, senior manager of Application Development, Welch Foods, Inc.
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Information technology plays a critical business role in today’s corporate environment, where many companies have come to rely on IT to provide valuable efficiencies and insight that help businesses to grow and prosper. Such is the case at Welch Foods, Inc. (Welch’s), a family-farmer owned company and the leading marketer of Concord and Niagara grape-based products.

Recognizing that IT plays a critical role in helping the company maintain its competitiveness, Welch’s truly embraces IT as a business partner. They harnessed the power of their IT team, which is managing a whole host of large scale, strategic transformation opportunities, to effectively turn its massive amounts of data into actionable insights that helped optimize their product portfolio, reduce out-of-stock inventory, and improve promotional effectiveness.

Throughout the journey, Welch’s inherently understood the importance of teamwork. Not only did Welch’s embed collaboration across their internal teams and operational processes, but these values were extended well beyond Welch’s team to include Fujitsu and the broader delivery team.

While creating a team sounds simple and easy enough to do, the ability to truly unite people across boundaries, cultures and companies is a very powerful advantage that many companies don’t have. Welch’s “we’re-in-it-together” mindset is what sets them apart from the rest and is the unique quality that has helped them achieve a leadership position in the marketplace and develop the culture of excellence they enjoy today.

Welch’s collaboration principles nicely reinforce Fujitsu’s way of doing business and affirm our brand promise, shaping tomorrow with you. While every word of that promise is important, it’s the word “with” that conveys our genuine and long-term commitment to our customers’ success—to roll up our sleeves right alongside them to make their ambitions a reality.

We recently had the opportunity to talk to two of Welch’s IT leaders, Dave Jackson, director of IT and CIO, and Mark Richard, senior manager of Application Development. I invite you to learn about Welch’s transformation journey and discover how Fujitsu and Welch’s are working together to shape the company’s future.

Bob Pryor
President and CEO
Fujitsu America, Inc.
Harnessing the power of the IT team

Name: Dave Jackson
Position: director of IT and CIO, Welch Foods, Inc.

Name: Mark Richard
Position: senior manager of Application Development, Welch Foods, Inc.

Challenge: Turn massive amounts of data into actionable insights

Portraits: George Disario
Welch Foods, Inc. ("Welch’s") is a family-farmer owned company and the leading marketer of Concord and Niagara grape-based products. Welch’s products range from 100% juices and juice cocktails to jams, jellies and single-serve products in a variety of shapes and sizes. Welch’s products are sold throughout the United States and in approximately 40 countries around the globe.

Welch’s IT is heavily integrated into the organization and collaborates with various business and functional teams to achieve the company’s corporate goals and growth ambitions. In 2006, Welch’s invited Fujitsu to join that collaboration with the implementation of Oracle® 11i E-Business Suite. Following the successful go-live of that project, Fujitsu began to deliver Application Managed Services and, in 2012, Welch’s expanded the scope of Fujitsu services to include the complete business and applications services suite. Fujitsu is now the primary vendor delivering Oracle services to Welch’s.

The critical role of IT
Welch’s understands the importance and influence of IT on the company’s employees, business, and future. By design, Welch’s IT professionals have broad and diverse business experience and knowledge to help the organization achieve their biggest ambitions. “Our goal is to combine our extensive business understanding and technical expertise to deliver a strategic advantage through innovative decision-making tools, business analytics, operational reporting and best-in-breed applications,” says Dave Jackson, director of IT and CIO at Welch’s. “While Welch’s is a huge household brand, it is really a small company with limited resources. We must, by necessity, find better and more efficient ways of doing business to remain competitive. That’s where IT can add significant value.”

With a massive amount of data related to the business, gleaning insights and taking action requires robust business analytics. Welch’s IT put the tools in place, and they have helped Welch’s optimize its product portfolio, reduce out-of-stock inventory, and improve promotional effectiveness. In short, business analytics and integrated systems provide Welch’s with information they can trust, allowing them to focus on results they can measure and respond to issues more quickly and decisively. “In the past, we had data. Now, we have actionable information,” says Mark Richard, senior manager, Application Development.

Further, Welch’s IT organization also has found a way to maintain top quality support at a significantly reduced cost, having saved approximately 20% on its managed service costs. These significant cost savings have freed up resources to take on other projects, cover cost increases, and fund ongoing business operations. Additionally, after Welch’s agreement to select Fujitsu as its primary service provider, Fujitsu worked with the Welch’s IT department to improve its speed to market, quality of deliverables and overall testing process.

Welch’s credits its success, in part, to the Fujitsu team, which has consistently provided the company with world-class professionals who have exceptional technical skills. “They understand our business, the software and processes that support it, and provide us with outstanding solutions that rarely require rework,” says Mr. Jackson. Through the Fujitsu Center of Excellence, Welch’s also has access to additional expertise and guidance to ensure the company produces the best and most innovative solutions for the company. In the end, the global capability and know-how of Fujitsu, coupled with their commitment and desire to expand and grow with Welch’s, has been invaluable.

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**Building company culture through IT**

Welch’s provides video conferencing, virtual desktops, remote access and mobile devices to offer flexibility in how and where people work. Globally, Welch’s technology enables employees with the ability to connect with colleagues and their managed service partners. It also provides a vital means for developing personal connections across boundaries to help Fujitsu employees feel like they are part of the Welch’s team.

**Expanding and growing with Fujitsu**

At Welch’s, Fujitsu is part of the family. While Welch’s has the same high expectations of Fujitsu team members, they also treat them like part of their team to encourage continued commitment and loyalty. “It takes months, if not years, to acquire the knowledge and experience that enables people to contribute at the highest level possible. We firmly believe that, in treating Fujitsu employees as our own, we will turn out a better quality product,” says Mr. Jackson. So, seeing Fujitsu team members at Welch’s IT department meetings and office celebrations is in perfect harmony with the way Fujitsu and Welch’s view their relationship—as one big team that’s in it together and for the long haul.

One of the core themes of the Fujitsu-Welch’s relationship is the consistency and seamlessness with which they deliver. Both Welch’s and Fujitsu make the effort to integrate the teams and work as a cohesive unit that truly operates as one entity. Team members hold knowledge-sharing sessions, work directly with each other (versus filtering work through team coordinators), and hold monthly combined team meetings. This helps to strengthen the inter-team relationships, which in turn helps them better refine requirements, understand issues and implement solutions. “Some of the same people that worked with us at the beginning are still with us today. That builds trust and confidence, which is priceless,” says Mr. Richard.

Equally important to teamwork, Welch’s commends Fujitsu for the integrity of its people. Be it working through the details of a contract, managing personnel or performance issues, or addressing process changes, Welch’s depends on Fujitsu for frank, transparent discussion and to always honor its commitments. “Formal contracts are required in this day and age, but we do not worry that we’ll have to fall back on the legal language of our Fujitsu contract,” says Mr. Richard.
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