



Munchies

A management system capable of supporting a franchise business that could also serve the growing market for online customers.

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Background

Munchies, a chain of sandwich bars, run a franchise operation with high-profile Dublin outlets in Wicklow Street, the IFSC and East Point Business Park.

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"We wanted to transform ourselves from a cottage industry to a modern business," said Munchies Director John Keane. "Through our Dublin outlets in the IFSC and East Point Business Park we knew we had a strong brand among office workers that could be further explored."

Munchies identified a business lunch market of loyal customers who are

well educated, short on time and demanding. "We looked at the channels to reach them and the obvious one was the PC on their desk," said Keane.

To meet the needs of the business, each franchise till had to be independent yet connected to a central web site and the head office accountancy system. To meet the needs of the online customer, each outlet till had to be integrated with the web, creating an uninterrupted flow between the customer placing the order and the sandwich shop. Customers would be able to order and pay for food online, using credit or laser cards, without having to leave their desks.

from the ground up, built on the Munchies used point-of-sale software specialist Captiva for the tills but a solution for its back end requirements was harder to find. Out-of-the box packages tended to be over elaborate and expensive, needing heavy customisation to improve business



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processes that were very specific to the company.

Munchies decided to develop its own bespoke solution with Ergo Software Solutions. The plan was to provide a build-to-fit engine that could easily be made available to other franchises as the business grew.

Meeting Specific Needs

Through a process of consultation and analysis Ergo Software Solutions helped Munchies identify precisely what it needed in terms of functionality. It was agreed that the solution should be built from the ground up, meeting the business needs while ensuring it was easy to use for each franchise and their customers.

The development team built a web engine and back office software that could integrate with the different components which included a Sage accountancy package. At the customer-facing end it allowed for many variables. Provisioning for all the different types of sandwich and filling was only part of it. There had to be customer sign-in and an element of identify management because different people in the same company might be responsible for different orders at different times of the day. Food prices might also change, depending on the customer.

The system could also be adapted to run on a company's intranet with a secure link to the Munchies website that precludes employees from having to access the internet. At the backend, Ergo built a total management system. Delivery dockets, statements, and invoicing were the basics requirements, but the solution went much deeper. Not only could each outlet access its own site to review daily orders, there was also provision for the head office to have central access to every franchise and dig down into each till to see the cash flow.

Up until this point, Munchies had a strained relationship with some of its franchises, losing out on agreed royalties. Now, the relationship could be built on a solid footing. “Unless we tell them otherwise in writing, all we do with the tills is draw out reports on sales volumes by channel and product category and then do a debit on their royalties,” said Keane.

The centralised back office also allows for a consistency of menus and pricing, providing a single view and giving the company unprecedented access to sales reports and business intelligence.

The bespoke solution has given Munchies a solid platform for going forward and encouraging new partners into the franchise. The business plan is to create 50 new outlets between 2006-2012, some of them overseas.

In the near future, Keane expects the business-to-business online ordering service to account for 40 per cent of income. He was delighted with the project and spoke highly of Ergo's contribution: “It quickly became the leading partner in this project. Ergo helped us take an old company and start afresh. It gave us a reusable technology that we could run out to any number of new franchises, helping grow the business.”

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