



Chef Works Gets Cookin' With Equation Technologies, Relationship Leads to System Ownership and Independence



Chef Works

Customer

Chef Works

Industry

Manufacturing & Distribution

Challenge

Replace an antiquated financial system with a system that offers improved budgeting, higher volume, enhanced financial statements

Solution

Equation Technologies migrated Chef Works to Sage 300, and now they work with a single point of contact

Results

- System independence
- Single point of contact for all aspects of their system
- Streamlined orders
- Enhanced customer service
- Improved revenues

Sage 300 helped Chef Works reduce costs, streamline processes and grow revenue 18% within their first year of implementation. However, initially, Chef Works was forced to rely on three different firms to provide support and guidance they needed. Today, they rely on one firm Equation Technologies. Chef Works has complete ownership of their system to create dashboard reports, an integrated web store and day to day system maintenance. Serving the restaurant and hospitality industries worldwide, Chef Works supplies the nest quality clothing, uniforms and accessories at the most competitive pricing to their customers from their San Diego, CA distribution center. Relying on their reputation for fast, easy and friendly service, Chef Works has sustained significant year-over-year growth since its founding in 1994. A family owned business, Chef Works has stemmed from nearly 40 years of experience in the uniform manufacturing and distribution business.

Need to handle higher volume leads to Sage 300

In early 2005, Chef Works began the search to replace their antiquated financial system. "We needed to have better budgeting capabilities, the capacity to handle more volume and the ability to create more sophisticated financial statements," said Dave Roth, Chef Works' COO. Critical to Chef Works' business is the ability for customers to place orders quickly and easily. This initial project would be the basis for a complete business application transformation that would automate nearly every aspect of Chef Works' business. Chef Works implemented Sage 300 with another business partner that did not have expertise in either Sage CRM or development and consequently brought in two other firms to help with those aspects of the project. Chef Works had two different order entry interfaces written during the first year of their implementation, both resulting in support challenges. Working with three different providers was proving to be frustrating and time consuming. There was no single point of contact who was familiar with all aspects of the system, nor did the providers understand where Chef Works wanted to go.

"We are a fast growing company and we want our partners to be with us for a long time," said Dave. "We have high expectations of everyone we



work with to understand every aspect of our business. In turn, we open our operation up completely to give someone the opportunity to learn. We knew there would be advantages to working with one company for our Sage 300, Sage CRM and development; I just did not believe such a company existed." Chef Works sought the advice of their in house IT consultant who led them to Equation Technologies.

Chef Works finds expert guidance, service and support with Equation Technologies

"From the first time we met with Equation Technologies we could tell that their approach was completely different from other companies we had worked with," said Dave. "They took the time to understand our business and made recommendations to get to the root of our problems, not just put a band aid on them."

Equation Technologies helped create and maintain an application infrastructure that Chef Works can count on to process a tremendous volume of orders each month, the lifeblood of their business. "There are several integrated pieces that make up our system," said Dave. "We need to have everything working in harmony for us to be efficient and take care of our customers. We relied on Equation Technologies also for training and support as we wanted to be as self sufficient as possible."

Equipped with a full understanding of Chef Works' business, Equation Technologies is able to make recommendations that would continue to automate processes and allow for greater efficiency. Over time, new technologies led to changes within the system. For example, initially for reporting, Equation Technologies worked with Chef Works to develop a series of reports using Crystal Reports. Now, all of Chef Works' critical business applications run on SQL, which allows Chef Works to access information across of their systems using an MS SQL web dashboard.

Automated garment decoration application implemented and integrated into Sage 300

Once Sage 300 was implemented correctly and working smoothly, Chef Works knew they could rely on Equation Technologies for expert guidance and superior service. Chef Works focused next on automating the highly detailed embroidery process. "We needed an automated system that tracked every step of our customer's orders and allowed us to see exactly where every order was in the embroidery, fulfillment and shipping process," said Dave Roth, Chef Works' COO. "We turned to Equation Technologies to help define the

project and evaluate options." Nearly 30% of Chef Works' orders require custom embroidery. "We had been tracking the embroidery manually on spreadsheets," said Dave. "There was so much paper being moved between departments, which led to a high degree of redundancy and opportunity for keystroke errors." Chef Works needed the ability to have their customers confirm their embroidery options and have the entire process tracked. By doing so, Chef Works would reduce errors and improve customer service. Chef Works selected EmbTrak to manage the embroidery process. "We had three companies working together as a team us, Equation and EmbTrak and it worked out great," said Dave. "We have an order entry system housed in Sage 300 that integrates with an autonomous embroidery entry system."

The next piece was to develop a way for customers to enter their own orders. We built an order entry portal that our customers can use to completely manage their orders. They can select the exact garment and embroidery options and see it on their screen before ordering. The orders flow through EmbTrak, to Sage 300 and onto the warehouse floor for fulfillment."

"We are proud that we can manage our systems on our own and incorporate new pieces as necessary. Once we had the framework in place, we were able to run with it. We appreciate that Equation Technologies was willing to work with us to get us to this level of independence, but we also appreciate that they are just a phone call away and always ready to give us the guidance we need."

Dave Roth
Chief Operating Officer, Chef Works



Warehouse automation application rounds out Chef Works' vision

"When we started revamping our systems in 2005, our vision was to have a completely integrated and automated set of applications that shared data and worked in harmony," said Dave. "This would include our financial management and CRM systems all the way through embroidery, warehouse automation and fulfillment."

Warehouse automation was the next step in the process. Again, Chef Works relied on Equation Technologies to help define the project and give guidance on what to look for. Critical was the ability to have the warehouse application integrate with the other systems that were already in place. Chef Works selected Warehouse Librarian by Intek. "Equation architected the way data would be sent to Warehouse Librarian," said Dave. "We made some adjustments to the current integrations in place that allowed Sage 300 to be the primary data source."

Orders are processed in Sage 300 and then sent to Warehouse Librarian. Automated carousels pick garments and if decoration is required, will send them to the embroidery area. Decoration guidelines are accessed in EmbTrak. Once the garments are decorated, they are then sent back to the warehouse ready to be packed and shipped. "It is like watching an orchestra," said Dave. "Every area does its part and all the systems are integrated and share data to ensure a seamless and automated workflow."

The results are in: streamlined orders, enhanced customer service and improved revenues

Chef Works' systems have evolved significantly over the last five years. Today, Chef Works relies on the financial complexities of Sage ERP Accpac; Sage CRM for contact management; AvaTax for sales tax; DataSelf for warehousing reports; Warehouse Librarian for complete warehouse and fulfillment automation; EmbTrak to manage the embroidery process; MS SQL web dashboards; and an integrated ecommerce website. The result is a reliable, effective solution for Chef Works' 90 system users. Working with a single point of contact that has full understanding of how all these pieces work together, Chef Works has the benefit of outstanding service and delivery to their customers.

Chef Works is far more streamlined and can turn orders around much faster. "Our embroidery error rate has been reduced to less than .5%, which is well respected in our industry," said Dave. "Plus we are able to turn

around orders far quicker than industry averages. We are fulfilling 350-400 orders a day and on average pick nearly 10,000 pieces a day," said Dave. "When we were doing this manually, it was atrocious. We are doing a



whole lot more today with less and our financial statements prove it." Chef Works' labor costs have gone down 9% while experiencing a 19% increase in quantity of orders shipped over the last year. The results are accredited to the culmination of systems and processes that Chef Works has developed over the years.

Chef Works takes complete ownership and independence of systems

With many technology projects, there is a fear that there will be an on going, costly relationship with the firms providing the applications and support. While some businesses are forced to rely on other companies to maintain their day to day application needs, Chef Works desired a hands on approach, the guidance we need."

Chef Works developed and deployed a web store that allows customers to order and re-order online. It pulls customer and order data from Sage 300 as well as decoration rules and guidelines from EmbTrak. "Our customers can login to their account and place their own orders," said Dave. "We set up rules that adhere to their corporate branding standards so there is no room for error. Our customers love this."

With training on table and data structures from Equation Technologies, Chef Works has developed a sophisticated reporting dashboard. "We standardized on all SQL applications," said Dave. "This allows us to

pull reports with data that may reside in any one of our individual systems. Having access to data gives us the ability to make adjustments to our business to ensure a superior customer experience, which translates into profits for Chef Works."

Working with Equation Technologies

Chef Works has taken advantage of Equation Technologies' Support Level Agreement plan. Services such as consistent on-site visits along with phone support and programming are bundled together for a fixed monthly price. "We initially started this plan so our users had access to training. We wanted to be sure we were using our system efficiently and correctly in order to get the most out of it," said Dave. There are numerous small projects that Equation Technologies has completed that have made an impact at Chef Works.

"Equation Technologies deserves all the praise I can give them," said Dave. "They take the time to find the right people for their company so they can deliver us exceptional service and support. They do not rest until they fully understand the situation and come up with a solution."

"The most unique aspect of working with Equation Technologies has been their ability to work with other parties to create the systems we have in place today," said Dave. "They are a true partner and clearly have Chef Works' best interest at heart."

"They are the best company I have worked with in my life. They are knowledgeable, competent and willing to work with you to understand your needs and come up with the best solution. I would highly recommend Equation Technologies."

*Dave Roth
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