



Epicor Success Story

Lightlife Foods

Uses Epicor Informance EMI for collecting real-time plant operations data to optimize operational performance for profitable growth

Company Facts

- ▶ Location: Turner Falls, Massachusetts
- ▶ Industry: Food Manufacturing
- ▶ Web site: www.lightlife.com



Success Highlights

Challenges

- ▶ Real-time manufacturing intelligence system to provide insights into shop floor operations to help improve overall plant floor efficiencies and maximize profitable manufacturing outcomes

Solution

- ▶ Epicor® Informance® enterprise manufacturing intelligence (EMI) system

Benefits

- ▶ Grew OEE for batch processes 50% and overall plant efficiency 40% by leveraging real-time plant analytics
- ▶ Dramatic improvements in operational performance
- ▶ Boosted continuous improvement initiatives with real-time production information
- ▶ Freed up capacity on the plant floor for improved product throughput
- ▶ Better control over product quality and safety processes

Lightlife Foods started in 1979 when Michael Cohen, an original partner in the New England Soy Dairy in Greenfield, Massachusetts, sensed an opportunity to introduce the Indonesian staple, tempeh, to the American dinner plate. In 1985, Lightlife launched Tofu Pups, a healthier, veggie alternative to the good ol' American hot dog. And thus, Lightlife was born and the seeds of a veggie revolution were planted.

For years, Lightlife continued their mission to provide quality vegetarian and vegan foods prepared in the most healthy and sustainable manner. Then, about 10 years ago, the small company caught the eye of ConAgra Foods, a company known for maintaining the integrity of its brands and empowering them to stay true to the beliefs and values on which they were built. ConAgra Foods uses the Epicor Informance enterprise manufacturing intelligence (EMI) system for collecting real-time plant operations data to improve operational performance at its manufacturing sites and rolled the system out to Lightlife when it came under new ownership. Lightlife has since returned to a privately-held company once again, but the power behind Informance lives on in its Turner Falls, Massachusetts manufacturing facility.

Informance collects real-time production data automatically from seven different operating lines at the Turner Falls facility, eliminating inaccurate and time-consuming manual data collection. Operators on the shop floor use touchscreen technology to gauge production performance, such as



downtime, cycle time and product defect rates, allowing operators to respond immediately to problems or improve performance on the spot.

With the data collected from Informance, Lightlife has been able to effectively increase capacity on the shop floor to improve product throughput while cutting costs which has led to increased profitability.

Informance shines a light on plant efficiency

Within the first three years of using Informance, Lightlife grew its overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) for batch processes by 50% and improved overall plant efficiency 40% by using the tools and real-time plant analytics inside Informance.

“The Informance system’s dramatic impact on the plant’s efficiency has improved in direct labor performance and influenced savings in overtime reduction,” estimates Larkin who explains how Informance has enabled them to beat the standards for plant efficiency and continue to improve upon those standards year over year. “With Informance we have the information we need to help us run the plant more efficiently which has enabled us to run a four-day operations schedule versus five or six days,” add Larkin.

Larkin continues, “It’s difficult to explain how 2% OEE impacts the company, but if you can say it’s worth \$8,000, for example, the company can put an actual value on it. We can easily extract this information from the Informance system.”

Tracking results for OEE is just one example of their continuous improvement methods that have had a significant impact on the company’s production (and financial) performance.

Optimizing equipment to ensure they’re getting the most out of their assets is another. “Using data from the Informance system helped us make the decision to replace two of our packaging lines,” says Larkin. “Informance gave us a snapshot of downtime, the amount of repairs made to the line and the downtime associated with those repairs. Our finance team then tied it back to costs to evaluate spending the money to replace the equipment.”

Informance supports product quality and safety processes

As with any food manufacturer, Lightlife is governed by strict FDA standards. Informance provides the manufacturing intelligence Lightlife needs to effectively control product quality and safety. Informance also records product defect rates—the “who, what, where, when”—to help Lightlife understand the rate at which defects occur and put a time stamp on the event to help investigate root cause analysis. “With Informance we can be proactive versus reactive for resolving defective products,” says Larkin.

The “Ah Ha” moment

For Larkin, running smoother daily operations meetings was the “ah ha” moment. With clear manufacturing facts and real-time information, the team can put action plans together and collaborate more effectively with other departments like the maintenance and quality teams.

“The power of the system is immense in our daily operations meetings,” says Larkin. “Our operating lines have targets for efficiency and as long as we’re inside those targets there’s no need to talk about them. If we’re consistently exceeding targets,

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Mike Larkin, Director of Operations | Lightlife Foods



we may look at it to see if the targets are too low. The data is always there and we can easily mine for the information we need to help with processes like building budgets, setting run rates, examining the cost of goods to manufacture and tying that back to production performance. To be able to say that the system is user friendly and easy for anyone to capture, analyze, and report on the data is really where the rubber meets the road.”

Return on investment

“Informance is worth the investment and can really pay itself back when leveraged properly,” says Larkin explaining how Informance is what ultimately drives Lightlife’s continuous improvement projects.

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software that is designed around the needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 40 years of experience with our customers’ unique business processes and operational requirements is built into every solution—in the cloud, hosted, or on premises. With a deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions spur growth while managing complexity. The result is powerful solutions that free your resources so you can grow your business. For more information, [connect with Epicor](#) or visit www.epicor.com.



Contact us for more information on Epicor Products and Services

+1.800.999.6995 info@epicor.com www.epicor.com

Corporate Office

804 Las Cimas Parkway
Austin, TX 78746
USA
Toll Free: +1.888.448.2636
Direct: +1.512.328.2300
Fax: +1.512.278.5590

Latin America and Caribbean

Blvd. Antonio L. Rodriguez #1882 Int. 104
Plaza Central, Col. Santa Maria
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, CP 64650
Mexico
Phone: +52.81.1551.7100
Fax: +52.81.1551.7117

Europe, Middle East and Africa

No. 1 The Arena
Downshire Way
Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1PU
United Kingdom
Phone: +44.1344.468468
Fax: +44.1344.468010

Asia

238A Thomson Road #23-06
Novena Square Tower A
Singapore 307684
Singapore
Phone: +65.6333.8121
Fax: +65.6333.8131

Australia and New Zealand

Suite 2 Level 8,
100 Pacific Highway
North Sydney, NSW 2060
Australia
Phone: +61.2.9927.6200
Fax: +61.2.9927.6298

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