



## NetCacao Relies on Lawson M3 to Launch its Activities

After taking over an industrial site where activities had been interrupted, and which required a thorough modernization, NetCacao found a flexible solution in Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage, a solution that could be quickly implemented and allowed it to manage all of its product transactions.

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Assistant General Manager, NetCacao

NetCacao was founded in 2006 with the objective of taking over the Saint-Menet industrial site, near Marseille, which Nestlé had announced it was closing. Opened in the early 1960's, this plant specialized in the manufacturing of freeze-dried coffee (which was invented in 1963) and chocolate. NetCacao's founders planned on concentrating its efforts exclusively on chocolate production, while increasing the product range, and hiring some of the personnel from the site. However, to make the activity sustainable, a complete modernization of the industrial process was necessary, especially the computer systems.

After closing in June 2005, the site reopened its doors under the NetCacao banner on March 1, 2006. Nestlé made the new AS/400 system, on which the old management application had been running, available to the new team. However, despite its usefulness under the old circumstances, it was no longer suitable for the company's requirements in terms of technology, available functionality, or future growth. In order to allow the new company to attain its production objectives, it was essential to rapidly find software capable of managing the product flow within the company in a high performance mode, and to interface with the machine control systems.

### **A Solution Adapted to the Situation and the Strategy**

In addition to the time and budget restraints, it was also necessary to work with the limited resources available to the company. Management had changed significantly and personnel had been greatly reduced. As a result, NetCacao needed a preconfigured solution for their business sector that had the ability to respond to their specific requirements, allowed for rapid implementation, and required very few resources. During the summer of 2006, they opted for Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage. "Some of our managers, who are true veterans in the chocolate industry, were already familiar with Lawson M3, and knew that the QuickStep product was very likely to meet our needs. SAP, which we had been considering for some time, appeared to be oversized," remembers Jérôme Charpentier, the assistant general manager of NetCacao who is responsible for the Lawson project.

One of the essential elements in NetCacao's strategy was to increase the range of products produced at the site. In fact, during the time Nestlé ran the operation for the chocolate sector, Saint-Menet essentially produced chocolate bars. However, the by-products (such as dough, cocoa butter, cocoa powder, liquid chocolate and chocolate chips) were of particular interest to industrial clients in the confectionery, biscuit and baking industries. The objective at NetCacao was to change the plant's production equipment so that, at each step in the process, the by-product could be recuperated, sold or forwarded to the next process. It was therefore essential to implement a tool capable to manage these flows, to control the quantities for each ingredient and to monitor the by-product entering or leaving the process. Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage integrated these processes and managed the constraints specific to this sector.



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## A Project Finished in Four Months

In September 2006, the implementation project began with an organization that had been reduced to a minimum. Only four people were responsible for the project. They were a logistics specialist for the product flow; a production specialist who was an expert in the plant's industrial procedures; an accountant who was responsible for the accounting plan for future integration with financial software; and finally a computer specialist, responsible for piloting the development.

The computer specialist also managed the Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage interface with the manufacturing computer system to ensure that the changes in quantities were automatically accounted for as the batches were processed. In addition, he established the different reports to be produced once the Lawson M3 Output Management (MOM) tool was set up. As the team was so small, and because there was much to accomplish in the company during start-up, none of its members could dedicate 100 percent of their time to the project.

Despite this, due to everyone's contribution and the methodological tools used, only four months were taken to implement the software on a renewed iSeries hardware platform. "The essential sections were really finished within three months, and the fourth month, namely January 2007, was mainly a fine-tuning and consolidation period," emphasizes Jérôme Charpentier.

## Lawson Steers a Successful Implementation

The role of the Lawson Professional Services consultants was also essential to enable NetCacao to reach their expected deadline. "In all cases, where our needs were different from the options provided in the software, the Lawson Professional Services consultants helped us with this project, always demonstrating the industry expertise to meet our expectations and inventiveness to find a satisfactory solution," remarks Jérôme Charpentier. For example, one of the key points in the project, and the only specific development required by NetCacao, was the creation of a module which allowed managing the labeling used in the plant. In effect, Nestlé, who remains one of NetCacao's main clients, required that these codes be respected so they would be compatible with its own management system.

On the other hand, these codes were sometimes hard coded in the installations, and the operators who used to work for Nestlé were used to using them. Although it is pre-configured, Lawson Professional Services consultants were able to take advantage of the flexibility and scalability that the QuickStep solution offered to successfully install a system that meets the unique needs of all parties involved.

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## A Technological and Cultural Revolution

Training is another essential aspect for making this project succeed. In fact, some of the employees worked on the previous coffee operations at the site, and did not know the chocolate process. Others were used to the old system, which used ergonomics with a different character. For everybody, starting up the operations at the site was a challenge, and the arrival of a new tool appeared as somewhat of a cultural and technological revolution. Within one week, a few people were trained. Those individuals then taught the application's operations to 40 users over a three-week period.

On February 1, 2007, everyone was ready for the "big bang", because it had been decided to have no overlap period or double accounting entries. "A commitment from the users was essential if we were to succeed with this launch. We have really not experienced any resistance, especially because of the very pleasant graphical interface," notes Jérôme Charpentier.

As expected, Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage took over from the previous application to manage all the product flow within the plant. The new tool contributes to greater operational efficiency within the plant, but it also has other advantages, as Jérôme Charpentier explains. "We want to work with high-volume distributors who require their suppliers to observe strict standards and need to show a history sufficient for auditing. The new tool allows for rapid implementation and process visibility which takes us in that direction. As well, it has the capacity to enable us to interface with third-party systems like Nestlé.

For the moment, NetCacao's next step will consist of implementing an accounting and finance system which will be integrated with Lawson QuickStep Food and Beverage.

## About NetCacao

NetCacao was founded in 2005 with the support of the companies Sucen and Chenal Associates. Based at Saint-Menet, at the mouth of the Rhône River, the company produces all types of chocolate, industrial and retail snacks, including crushed cocoa beans, dough, powder and bars. NetCacao employs 200 people and expects annual sales to reach EUR 100 million.