

Turning Salt into Sales

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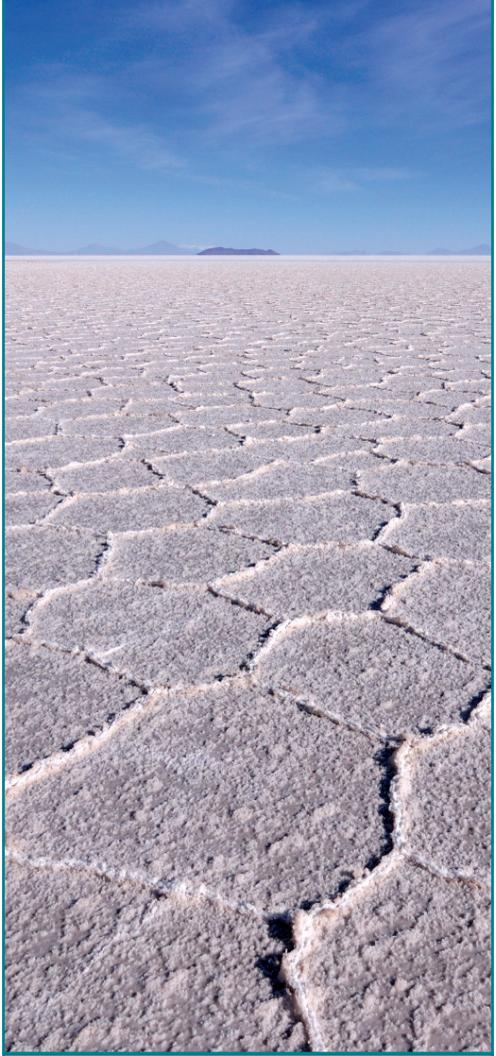
■ AT A GLANCE ■

COMPANY

US Salt

INDUSTRY

Food Manufacturing



■ The Company

U.S. Salt with annual revenues in excess of thirty million dollars is one of the major producers of salt in the world. The company, which is privately held, serves a variety of customers, ranging from bakeries and pharmaceutical manufacturers, which buy salt in bulk, to OEMs, which require the prepackaging and private labeling of various salt products. We offer about 20 different lines of salt products, ranging from table salt, salt crystals and salt blocks to sodium nitrite, a compound used as a preservative and as an ingredient in various rubber formulas, among other uses. Our company headquarters are located in Jacksonville, Fla. We maintain plants in Watkins Glen, New York, where a majority of the salt is extracted, as well as in Gibbstown, New Jersey.

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- Jeff Hedquist

Director of Information Technologies, US Salt

■ The Challenge

After acquiring these two plants, we realized we could improve customer service, reduce costs and enhance overall operational efficiency by linking our plants and headquarters through a Wide Area Network (WAN) and centralizing certain financial business functions. We concluded the most expedient hardware setup to be a client/server configuration with the server residing in Jacksonville and client workstations in Jacksonville and our two plants. Client/server architecture, we felt, would enable us to leverage our currently installed hardware and also let us realize the benefits of a centrally managed system, including ease of maintenance, avoidance of duplication of functionality and the easy implementation of software upgrades. Equally as important, it would put the most current information where it could be best utilized – at the fingertips of users.

■ The Solution

The Watkins Glen, New York facility had been using an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution, which worked well but was not conducive to client/server architecture. Our reseller, M Power Specialists based in Buffalo, New York, suggested we look at SYSPRO ERP software. A strong selling point was that SYSPRO is designed specifically for client/server environments and is easily scalable as our company grows. Another feature that impressed us is the ability of the software to address formulas and recipes as a process client. Another point influencing our decision to go with SYSPRO is the software's



highly balanced functionality – it is flexible enough to handle a variety of manufacturing processes, but also offers equally strong capabilities on the financial and distribution sides. A critical point in our decision was also the experience of our reseller in implementing software in industries employing a variety of manufacturing methods. M Power can boast an extensive background with clients who utilize a variety of processes, including the batch process that is fundamental to the success of U.S. Salt. Moreover, we liked the fact that M Power has the capability and experience to service our multiple locations.

■ The Result

U.S. Salt employs a variety of manufacturing methodologies. These not only include a batch process, where we process the salt in various lots, but continuous process as is the case at the Gibbstown facility, make-to-stock, where we forecast the needs of customers and build stock available for shipment on demand, and make-to-order, where we build to special customer formulas and recipes. SYSPRO easily accommodates all these processes, enabling us to meet customer demand while maximizing the capacities of our plants. The software shows inventory on hand and correlates inventory with orders so we know when

we have the capacity to build to stock. Today, U.S. Salt is able to turnaround most orders within a phenomenal three-to-five-day period with enough flexibility to make last minute changes to the production schedule to accommodate same day turnaround in extreme cases.

The implementation of SYSPRO also produced some unexpected dividends. In addition to highly efficient operation in a client/server configuration operating on Windows NT, we found the software extremely user-friendly. Since it's Windows-based, many employees have learned it with ease. It also allows individual users to customize their screens, facilitates the use of shortcut keys and has an event management feature which serves to notify users when specific incidents, such as low stock quantity limits, occur. Additionally, we are able to easily download data from the SYSPRO database to Microsoft Access in order to produce a variety of management reports.

What's next for U.S. Salt? We are looking forward to the release of Version 6.0 of SYSPRO. We believe it will provide us with a whole new array of tools for database management, reporting and analysis.

Jeff Hedquist is Director of Information Technologies for U.S. Salt