



Programme Details

The E-process scheme aims to help companies identify and quantify the potential benefits of embracing technology by focusing on key business objectives or opportunities. It involves a short workshop, and if required, a subsequent e-process project which typically involves the implementation of an ICT Solution. Companies can use the service for multiple distinct projects, subject to approval.

The Management Information scheme (MIS) aims to improve the quality of management information through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) within companies. The use of innovative tools and techniques will help to ensure that companies remain competitive. The scheme can assist with software purchase; software implementation and user training in software.

The Company

Wilson's Country is a Craigavon based company employing 110 people which supplies pre-packed and processed potatoes and prepared fresh fruit to the retail and hospitality sectors. Customers include: Co-op, Dunnes Stores, Hastings Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Marks & Spencer, Musgrave, Spar and Tesco. Experiencing rapid growth in the 1990's due mainly to the arrival of the UK supermarket chains, Wilson's Country has quadrupled in size since 1997. Business is going from strength to strength with a 10% growth recorded annually for the past three years.

The Product/Service

Wilson's Country supplies pre-packed and processed potatoes and prepared fresh fruit to the retail and hospitality sectors.

The Challenge

With this success has come some difficulties, rapid growth meant that the business was spread over three geographically separate sites and the company's relatively simple ICT systems were not coping with a growing demand for responsive,

timely access to information and reports. In addition, retail customers were developing higher product and service expectations.

Wilson's Country sought advice from Invest Northern Ireland and initially, an ICT Advisor carried out a basic assessment of its ICT requirements. It was clear from the initial meeting that Wilson's Country would benefit from an in-depth workshop to examine the full business process from sales and stock management to production and despatch. The company was spending a significant amount of time manipulating data rather than updating and modernising its ICT system.

The E-business service – E-process and MIS

The E-business team matched the company with Vision, e-process consultants who facilitated the workshop and a detailed assessment of processes was carried out. The consultants were able to provide an objective assessment and identified ways in which a modernised ICT system, combined with the company's innovative approach to business, could help Wilson's Country save money



and maximise efficiency. “ Faced with a challenge, the company knew that long term success depended on its ability to embrace change and find innovative ways of managing its information systems. The workshop was a vital step forward,” says Lewis Cunningham. “The feedback was honest and constructive, helping us to identify key target areas which could make our business more responsive and competitive. A number of choices were identified including matching a new information system to the existing package based on Microsoft Access or simply updating the current system, however, the company opted for a more radical solution – the creation of a new business structure and an ICT solution that matched it. The Invest NI ICT Advisor and the e-process consultants were available to offer advice and support as the company met with information management system suppliers and studied the various systems available. Invest NI’s technical expertise was vital during the selection process as we really needed impartial advice when making our decision,” says Lewis Cunningham. “We decided on a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system driven by radio frequency and scanning technology that would be fully integrated across the whole business.” With eighteen months of planning the system is now ready to go live.

“Now challenging the way we do business is an integral part of our working environment - a concept we wouldn't have embraced so readily without Invest NI's support.”

Lewis Cunningham, Managing Director, Wilson's Country

The Benefits

Providing real time information on stock control throughout all company processes, Lewis Cunningham can already envisage clear benefits. “We have projected savings of more than £100,000 and streamlining our processes will improve efficiency in preparing and dispatching orders. Staff will be now able to focus on the specific tasks they are employed to do rather than spend time manipulating data. The support of all our staff in implementing this new system has led to the birth of a more dynamic, forward thinking culture. Staff have realised how positive change can be and how it can make a business more successful.”