



Customer Profile

Evans Vanodine reduces waste with Infor System21 Aurora



Facts at a glance

Product: Infor System21 Aurora

Industry: Chemicals

Country: UK

“Infor System21 Aurora Demand Planning enables us to manage peaks and troughs in business demand with greater precision.”

**—Anthony Evans, IT Director,
Evans Vanodine**

About the company

Established in 1919, Evans Vanodine is a family-owned manufacturer of cleaning and hygiene chemicals for the janitorial and livestock protection industries. Based just outside Preston in the northwest of England, Evans Vanodine produces 23 million liters of chemicals each year, ranging from products such as hand cleansers and high-performance floor polishes for the cleaning industry, to agricultural chemicals including livestock disinfectants, dairy hygiene solutions, and teat dips for farms.

As global demand for its products increased, Evans Vanodine built a new modern 100,000-square-foot manufacturing plant in the early 1980s at Walton Summit, just outside Preston. Having expanded the company further since then, it now operates from a five-acre site producing more than 1,600 different product lines and exporting to over 70 countries.

Setting the strategy

Like many process manufacturers, Evans Vanodine’s manufacturing and distribution operations are immensely complex. Its production facilities include 25 stainless steel, polythene, and pressurized mixing vessels, with capacities of up to 14,000 liters. These facilities create a total of 1,600 product lines across a variety of pack sizes, styles, and label variants according to customers’ individual demands. This complexity is further exacerbated by Evans Vanodine’s “customer first” ethos.

“Our customers want product formulations that are unique and specific to them,” explains the Evans Vanodine IT director, Anthony Evans. “We deliver exactly what they need, which means constantly changing demands on our production and buying operations. In addition, some of our raw materials are sourced from Asia and the Far East, and therefore have some long lead times.

“So if we get our forecast or inventory wrong, it can affect our customer service as well as our margins.”

Faced with this challenge, the chemicals manufacturer decided to undertake a review of its processes. The outcome of this review was that its stock-led approach to manufacturing—whereby replenishment was undertaken routinely once materials for a particular product dropped below a certain point—was simply too unresponsive to customer needs and potentially expensive.

It was not sufficient to deliver the high levels of service required to remain competitive, particularly in light of globalization, and inventory levels were either too high or too low. Therefore, Evans Vanodine decided to switch to a customer-led model of manufacturing.

To support this, Evans Vanodine required a software solution that would facilitate a customer-led approach.

The solution needed to deliver precision forecasting to ensure the plant produced exactly the right levels of products and managed seasonal fluctuations, and, in doing so, lowered inventory, reduced waste, and delivered greater customer satisfaction.

"We have experienced huge efficiency gains and have been able to make much better use of the resources we have saved. The Real Time solution also helps us to meet our regulatory requirements."

**—Anthony Evans, IT Director,
Evans Vanodine**

Getting business specific

Evans Vanodine already had some of the tools to achieve its challenge. It had used Infor™ ERP software for more than 20 years and recently upgraded to Infor System21 Aurora. But while Infor System21 Aurora is ideally suited to the process industry and ensures that manufacturing processes run at optimum efficiency, a more specialized demand planning and forecasting solution was necessary for the customer-led approach that Evans Vanodine required. "We needed something that could extend our ERP solution, helping us to anticipate demand, and respond rapidly to changes," continues Evans.

After reviewing the market, the company selected Infor System21 Aurora Demand Planning because of Infor's in-depth experience with the issues the company faced, a longstanding trusted relationship with Infor, and easy integration of the software with Infor System21 Aurora. "When it came to selecting a demand planning and forecasting solution, we were confident in selecting Infor," Evans adds.

"The solution is proven with other complex manufacturers, and its ability to analyse complex sales patterns to predict trends and plan for seasonal fluctuations is integral for our business to thrive."

"We were also keen to continue our relationship with Infor. In our 20 years working with Infor, support has been second to none. When we face a problem that we can't solve, they are always at hand to help out. Furthermore, they genuinely listen to feedback and take it onboard for future product development."

Seeing results

Since implementing Demand Planning, Evans Vanodine has reduced both finished goods and raw materials stock by 25%. Supply chain performance is more efficient, and the company is able to deliver superior customer service and order fulfilment.

"Demand Planning enables us to manage peaks and troughs in business demand with greater precision," Evans adds. "Simply put, we make the right quantities of the right products to serve our customers and avoid unnecessary inventory or waste. We have much better forward visibility of seasonal fluctuations, which means we are able to manage these more effectively. For example, schools tend to undertake cleaning in the Easter and summer holidays, so we see demand peaks for certain products at these times. And for unpredictable events such as the foot-and-mouth outbreak, bird flu virus, and more recent swine flu pandemic, the system enables us to respond more quickly to sudden demand."

The swine flu pandemic saw demand for the company's hand and surface sanitizer products increase more than tenfold across May, June, July, and August 2009. This was a major business challenge, but the combination of Infor System21 Aurora and Demand Planning meant these high-volume orders were delivered quickly and efficiently. In order to extend the efficiency gains delivered through improved planning, Evans Vanodine also selected Infor's partner, Indigo, to provide an automated warehousing solution called Real Time for Infor System21 Aurora.

"Previously, warehouse pickers were handed a pile of pick notes and sent to collect stock, which was time-consuming, inefficient, and presented scope for manual error," Evans says. "The Indigo software tells us the exact position of all stock so that a picker simply locates an item and scans it with a handheld barcode reader, which automatically updates the system. Because we have complete visibility of our stock position when on the phone to a customer, we can guarantee availability and timescales for delivery."

"We have experienced huge efficiency gains and have been able to make much better use of the resources we have saved. The Real Time solution also helps us to meet our regulatory requirements. For example, we are not allowed to dispatch medicines such as teat dip unless the entire batch is complete and has been tested and approved by the Quality Control Department.

"Previously, monitoring this would have been time-consuming, but the Indigo software enables us to know exactly when the dip will be available for dispatch so that we can inform customers accordingly. It also means that a batch recall would be easier if required."

Evans Vanodine runs Infor System21 Aurora on IBM System i (9405) 520, ensuring maximum reliability whilst providing flexibility for growth and change. Having started out 20 years ago with an AS/400 server, the company believes the robustness and reliability of the hardware is unrivalled. "The IBM server is solid, reliable, and unparalleled in its ability to support our business software," Evans contends. "We have no need for aesthetics and functionality that we'll never use. We need a good number cruncher that we can rely on and have confidence in, and the System i is exactly that, while at the same time being flexible enough to adapt to the evolving demands of our business.

Doing business better

After completing demand planning and warehouse management, we now plan to automate our purchasing processes further—enabling invoices to be authorised on screen using a pin number rather than printing out reams of paper, saving time and paper," says Evans. "Infor System21 Aurora is the backbone of our business.

It keeps our core processes running efficiently and accurately, and as we continue to utilize more software functionality, we are seeing increased benefits. Through lower inventory, reduced waste, improved quality, and enhanced customer service, the software has paid for itself many times over."



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