IT – THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Interview with
CHRIS CRUTCHLEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR
ENJOY RAW CHOCOLATE

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In a series of interviews with
KFA Connect, company directors talk
about the issues which need to be
addressed to align IT with their business
strategy and operations.

The interviews will be brought together
as a report to be published by DECISION
magazine and then as a digital book.

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WHEN YOU'VE BEEN used to having sophisticated IT at a previous company, you miss it when it's gone, as Chris Crutchley can attest to. But having to go back to basics comes with the territory of setting up a small business that's still only four years old, so Crutchley knew he had to bide his time.

With his wife Steph, he launched Enjoy Raw Chocolate (Enjoy!) – manufacturing a premium, organic, naturally sweetened dark chocolate from raw cacao, inspired by food intolerances that made it impossible for Crutchley to eat conventional chocolate. Enjoy is approved by the Vegan Society and the Soil Association, and is also free from dairy, gluten, soya and refined sugars, which means that it appeals to those looking for a healthier chocolate as well as consumers with food intolerances.

It's all a far cry from Crutchley's former life working in manufacturing and supply chain management, not least because he had been used to having sophisticated systems for stock control and for re-ordering automatically. "I don't have all that any more," he says, almost wistfully. "I have a basic accounting system and a system that allows us to manage stock but it's not linked to material control. There are lots of processes we have been doing manually, even things as simple as batch code numbering."

Because Enjoy Raw Chocolate are organic, they have to provide traceable evidence to the Soil Association concerning the source of the ingredients. They are also audited every year as part of their membership of the Safe and Local Supplier Approval system. "From start to finish, the processes have to have an audit trail," says Crutchley. "That involves a lot of paperwork, and for us that has meant using manual forms to list every ingredient and every stage in the production process.

"There is a system I would like to have which will give that full traceability without everything having to be done manually, but we can grow a bit more before that level of IT becomes an imperative. But it does get more difficult as more people join the business, because the chances of someone getting a manual process wrong and affecting the crucial 'repeatability' in production will increase.

"IT not only has to fit our processes but it has to be scalable so it will still be suitable when we get bigger as a company. It will necessary to take out a

significant number of human hours from administrative tasks and would help us significantly with planning. It could help us to accurately work out how many of a particular flavour we need to make, and to prevent us running out of a specific product."

That ability to automate paperwork and better predict stock requirements would have a significant impact, says Crutchley. "Our non-added value time is quite large at the moment. We calculated that each of us would save twenty minutes a day by not having to write everything down. In the future, there are more ways in which we can automate. It takes a day to produce 200 boxes, but just one machine that we want to install could enable us to do that in an hour."

"What's critical is knowing precisely what you need IT to do," Crutchley maintains. "Our understanding of that is enhanced because we have had to deploy manual systems. I'm used to telling an IT department what I need and then them telling me the specification. For us, specifying correctly is going to be paramount, making sure that IT not only replicates the manual processes but is flexible and configurable. So we have to know exactly what we need and be able to put that into IT speak. If, for example,

we said we needed to be able to record the number of bars produced, we might end up with a system that couldn't record the number of rejects. Then the IT guy would say 'but you told me what you wanted was to record the number of products'!"

Enjoy are in an "exciting but scary" growth phase, helped by a recent exclusive partnership with Tree of Life, the UK's largest wholesale distributor of healthy, natural and organic products. They are pushing Enjoy Raw Chocolate products beyond the existing outlets of health food shops. The five-year plan includes selling overseas and creating a significant online presence, helped by increased marketing.

Does Crutchley aspire to become the new Green & Black, an organic chocolate market leader who sold out to Cadbury for multi-millions? "I do want Enjoy! to become a recognised brand in the UK and globally," he replies diplomatically, "known for being free-from, organic, vegan and great tasting."

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For 30 years, KFA Connect have been "developing innovative software solutions that make sales order processing, logistics, management reporting, and eCommerce functions run perfectly." This is achieved by uniting the best parts of current systems with modern bespoke software so that it perfectly fits an organisation's own individual processes and ways of doing business.

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Researched and published by
DECISION magazine
www.decisionmagazine.co.uk