

## SAP Customer Success Story Consumer Products – Flour and Other Grain Mill Products



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Kathy Hempe, IT Manager, General Mills Inc.

### AT A GLANCE

#### Company

- Name: General Mills Inc.
- Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Industry: Consumer products
- Products and services: Flour and other grain mill products
- Revenue: US\$12.5 billion (including proportionate share of joint ventures)
- Employees: 28,000
- Web site: [www.generalmills.com](http://www.generalmills.com)

#### Challenges and Opportunities

- Automate manual workflow for executing frequent changes in product specifications
- Manage large intellectual property database of 22,000 product specifications
- Provide ease of system navigation for more than 1,700 end users

#### Objectives

- Implement mass-change and undo functionality to improve productivity and product status visibility
- Ensure software ease of use
- Develop and implement custom functionality as part of overall IT system upgrade

#### SAP® Solution and Services

SAP® Custom Development services

#### Implementation Highlights

- General Mills' ability to test software while in development phase to streamline the development process and reduce associated costs
- SAP Custom Development organization's responsiveness to customer requirements and questions
- SAP's decision to add mass-change framework to the standard mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (mySAP PLM) application

#### Why SAP

- Highly qualified developers with extensive industry and application knowledge
- Proven development methodologies
- Easy access to global resources and ability to leverage collective expertise

#### Benefits

- Increased business team productivity by automating workflows
- Afforded capitalizing on business-driven changes more effectively to speed time to market
- Improved visibility of related objects to ensure product safety and quality
- Enabled leveraging mass-change framework for future enhancements

#### Existing Environment

mySAP ERP, mySAP PLM, and SAP Recipe Management applications

#### Third-Party Integration

- Database: Oracle
- Hardware: Hewlett-Packard
- Operating system: HP-UX

## GENERAL MILLS

### SAP® Custom Development Enables Mass Status Change in mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management

When you manufacture some of the world's best-loved food brands, it's important to deliver consistently the taste, texture, and quality your customers expect. If you're Minneapolis, Minnesota-based General Mills Inc., this means ensuring the integrity of some of the world's best-loved brands – including Betty Crocker, Häagen-Dazs, Pillsbury, Green Giant, Old El Paso, and Cheerios – all while adhering to strict regulations of various government agencies.

General Mills uses the mySAP™ Product Lifecycle Management (mySAP PLM) application to manage the intellectual property of its brands, including specifications for ingredients, packaging materials, and finished products. From time to time these specifications need to be modified, for reasons such as ingredient sourcing changes and product reformulations. To modify the specifications in the most efficient, effective, and reliable way, the company sought and engaged the SAP® Custom Development organization to devise a solution.

#### Seeking to Streamline Changes

General Mills manages the intellectual property of its brands across a broad spectrum of business units and channels. Data objects specify ingredients, formulas, processing, and packaging of each product, which results in a large volume of data – 22,000 specifications. Over the course of a year, General Mills makes some 10,000 modifications to these specifications before released product specifications can go out to all of the manufacturing sites.

“Changing a product or a group of products required us to manually move the data objects in the software system,” says Kathy Hempe, IT manager at General Mills. “A typical change could result in several hours’ work and moving 20 to 50 data objects through the review and approval process before the revised specifications could be used by our manufacturing facilities. If we needed to return the product to the previously approved specifications, it was equally complicated. We needed mass-change and undo functionality to streamline this process.”

### **Tapping into SAP Expertise**

General Mills has a deep history with SAP software, relying on the mySAP ERP application to manage the majority of the company’s business processes. When it was time to adapt mySAP PLM to meet its business needs, General Mills called on SAP Custom Development. “SAP Custom Development brought the skill set we needed. Since the end result would involve touching and deleting the underlying data, we felt there would be less risk working with SAP Custom Development,” Hempe explains.

SAP Custom Development met with General Mills to understand the requirements of the project. Many end users would be accessing the information, so the solution had to be relatively easy to navigate without IT department involvement. Also, the development work was part of a larger project at General Mills and had to coincide with the IT department’s biannual maintenance schedule for performing upgrades. SAP Custom Development was up for the challenge and moved the project start and end dates to fit in with General Mills’ overall IT strategy.

### **Developing the Solution**

SAP Custom Development approached the project in two phases, first focusing on the mass-change functionality and then the undo functionality. The development was managed out of the

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United States but drew on global resources. General Mills benefited by this collective expertise, as the project members collaborated to review concepts and design ideas, build a prototype, form a solid development plan, and ultimately deliver the application.

“SAP Custom Development was extremely responsive,” Hempe comments. “In fact, there were some requests we really didn’t think would be possible but felt it didn’t hurt to ask. So we asked, and the team answered our questions in a timely manner, even when it was past normal working hours.”

SAP Custom Development draws upon proven development methodologies and extensive knowledge of the mySAP Business Suite family of business applications to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits of custom development projects. During the development process, General Mills was able to work with the prototype to get a feel for the overall workflow and customer interface.

“We were able to get into SAP’s development environment and do some testing,” Hempe explains. “That was beneficial because it allowed us to work out bugs early on to streamline the development process. Had we waited until the solution was packaged and delivered to us, we would have faced having to send a lot of OSS [online support system] notes back and forth.”

### **Improvements Lead to Business Benefits**

Once General Mills completed testing and trained end users, the mass-change and undo functionality was ready to be used in the active production system. Now General Mills’ mySAP PLM software automates the mass-change and undo processes when modifying product specifications, moving the data objects through the workflow with a few keystrokes.

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all related objects as a group since they are all critical to the overall published specifications. We can’t change a higher-level specification if we don’t change a lower-level specification first,” Hempe comments.

The enhancements to mySAP PLM mean General Mills’ business teams can work more productively and efficiently – benefits that translate to bottom-line results in the highly competitive, highly regulated food industry. When environmental conditions or market research prompts finished product changes or enhancements, time to market is key. The custom functionality enables General Mills to implement the change in record time.

“SAP Custom Development has enabled us to derive more value from our SAP software investment by freeing our business teams to spend more time on value-added activities,” Hempe explains. “For example, in one instance, a modification impacted 332 objects. This used to require 5,001 keystrokes and over one day’s work to facilitate business change. We now do it in five minutes and six keystrokes.”

### **Foundation for the Future**

The new functionality delivered by SAP Custom Development provides a framework that supports future mass changes, not just for General Mills but for mySAP PLM customers at large. As a result of this project SAP has incorporated the mass-change framework as a part of the standard mySAP PLM application. This framework provides customers with a foundation to simplify the development of a mass-change scenario specific to their business requirements.

For the immediate future General Mills will leverage the new functionality it has gained through SAP Custom Development. The company will continue to evaluate how it can leverage its investment in SAP software to quickly and safely adapt to changing business needs.

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