

case study: bringing focus to FOCUS brands' IT organization & operations

results at a glance:

Over the years, Randstad Technologies has helped FOCUS Brands:

- Assess IT viability.
- Organize & staff outsourced IT functions.
- Increase efficiency through integrated infrastructure management.
- Improve consistency and achieve cost savings through firm-wide adoption of Lawson ERP.
- Streamline & automate business processes.

client profile:

Atlanta-based FOCUS Brands, Inc., is the franchisor and operator of over 3,300 ice cream shops, bakeries, restaurants, and cafes in the United States, Puerto Rico, and 50 foreign countries under the brand names Carvel, Cinnabon, Schlitzsky's, Moe's Southwest Grill, Auntie Anne's Pretzels, as well as the franchisor of Seattle's Best Coffee on certain military bases and in certain international markets.

business problem:

FOCUS Brands' private equity owner, engaged Randstad Technologies to perform an IT Assessment of the newly formed company. At the time, FOCUS Brands consisted only of Carvel Ice Cream and Cinnabon. The purpose of the assessment was to give Roark Capital insight into the potential value, costs, and risks associated with FOCUS Brands from an IT perspective.

The Assessment evaluated IT resources looking at such issues as the viability of integration, organizational structures, and application consolidation to determine the potential for and likelihood of achieving synergies from combining the separate brand's IT assets and re-engineering processes. The Assessment contained a number of recommendations for specific projects.

One of the first projects resulting from the Assessment was an Integration Plan, which would provide the groundwork to organize the FOCUS Brands' IT function. When the combined company first started there were a handful of IT employees — some from Carvel and Cinnabon, some newly hired. There were duplicative applications, platforms, and databases to be consolidated and streamlined to fashion an integrated enterprise able to support the various franchise units. Randstad Technologies served as their de facto IT department providing an acting CIO; assembling, deploying, and managing their infrastructure; and supporting their existing applications.

As a newly formed parent organization for franchisees representing at first two, and then more brands, FOCUS Brands did not have the systems to track franchise and contract information. Keeping up with details such as primary contacts, unit locations, and contract renewal and relicensing information relied on manual processes. Staying current and sharing brand-specific information was another need that would only grow in importance as the number of brands and franchisees increased.

Keeping up with details such as primary contacts, unit locations, and contract renewal and relicensing information relied on manual processes. Staying current and sharing brand-specific information was another need that would only grow in importance as the number of brands and franchisees increased. Keeping up with weekly sales figures for each franchisee required a telephone call with the specific store and then entering their information into a spreadsheet. This was another time-consuming, manual process that would benefit greatly from automation. Additionally, Carvel and Cinnabon were each running different ERP solutions unable to communicate with one another. This was costly and inefficient.

The Randstad Technologies solution:

At the conclusion of the Assessment, Randstad Technologies was retained to shape IT strategy and provide tactical services. It was apparent that FOCUS Brands had an urgent need for access to franchise specific information. There was no efficient way to manage thousands of store locations without it. One of their earliest IT endeavors was to contract with Randstad Technologies for the development of a Franchise Administration System (FAS). The original version, which focused on contact information, store location, and contract data took around 10 weeks to create and relied on an MS Access database. Continued refinement of the application expanded its applicability to include real estate and other information. Still in use, it now uses an SQL backend.

There was also a pressing need for an easily accessible channel of communication between FOCUS Brands and the franchisees. Once again, the company turned to Randstad Technologies for a solution. Randstad Technologies designed and deployed a SharePoint-based franchisee portal with customized subportals for each brand called ezLink. This two-month development effort provided franchisees with a centralized repository for a wide range of information pertaining to marketing, training programs, public relations, operations, purchasing, franchise sales, and preferred vendors. Randstad Technologies devised an updating process that minimized IT involvement in content maintenance. The firm developed a communications plan containing initiatives to drive adoption and use.

Randstad Technologies then developed a Franchise Information Collection System (FICS), which streamlined the collection of weekly sales information from the franchisees. Based on .NET technology with an SQL server backend, the system provides users an online method to login and enter sales figures. A variety of standard and ad hoc management reports are produced using Crystal Reports.

For three years, FOCUS Brands fully outsourced their IT function — from strategic planning to tactical implementation — to Randstad Technologies. Randstad Technologies provided everything from their interim CIO to infrastructure management to their

helpdesk function. The firm has performed the integration planning for numerous acquisitions including for Schlotzky's and Auntie Anne's. Randstad Technologies conducted an ERP applications assessment, which led to the firm-wide adoption of the Lawson ERP solution. They wrote all the conversion routines for the brands to salvage historical data and created software interfaces between the Lawson solution and the FICS and point-of-sale systems, and their distributors' and bank's systems.

The firm also performed the coding for a number of their customer-facing websites.

It had always been FOCUS Brands' intent to build an in-house IT capability but it wasn't until the acquisition of Schlotzky's, which had an internal IT department that this objective started to be realized. Their nascent IT staff consisted of an IT Director, a senior network administrator, two point-of-sale focused developers and two application-centric programmers. Randstad Technologies then moved into a consultative role and managed the transition applying knowledge transfer principles assuring their collective experience provided a solid foundation for the new internal IT department.

Since the beginning, Randstad Technologies has conducted more than 50 stand-alone IT projects for FOCUS Brands. The firm still plays an important role supporting their FICS, ezLink, and FAS applications as well as the customer-facing websites for Cinnabon and Schlotzky's. Randstad Technologies continues to provide significant hosting capacity, fulfilling much of FOCUS Brands' needs.

benefits delivered:

Over the years and through a relationship that started with total dependency and has now evolved into a much more balanced sharing of tasks, Randstad Technologies has provided FOCUS Brands with many important benefits.

- Assessed the viability of the original formation of the company from an IT perspective ensuring that the potential advantages offered by the appropriate organization and adoption of technology were attained.
- Organized and staffed FOCUS Brands' outsourced IT functions including their CIO allowing them to quickly leverage technology without the time-consuming and costly process of acquiring resources and building internal capabilities.
- Through integrated infrastructure management, Randstad Technologies created a merged network unifying cabling, servers, and email across all brands eliminating unnecessary duplication and reducing energy costs.
- The firm-wide adoption of the Lawson ERP system eliminated the costs associated with multiple ERP applications and afforded a consistent view of the various brands' operations and performance.
- Streamlined and automated business processes through creating applications reducing manual labor and providing more current and accurate information on which to base business decisions.



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