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Case study

Eastpack protects kiwifruit quality with data and analytics applications from Microsoft and Stellar Consulting

Kiwifruit - a product so associated with New Zealand that its very name comes from our national symbol - is one of our most celebrated exports.

A huge part of that success depends on state-of-the-art fruit packing facilities. New Zealand's largest 'post-harvest' kiwifruit operator is Eastpack, based in Te Puke.

Eastpack and business intelligence

Operating seven post-harvest packing facilities for kiwifruit and avocados, as well as a number of supporting coolstores, the team at Eastpack understands the value of keeping operations running smoothly and efficiently.

Business and systems analyst Renee Kelly is tasked with examining the business needs with regards to software and development and finding suitable solutions.

"In our data structure we had a multitude of transactional databases – systems that, in most instances, didn't integrate with one another or flow data through," says Renee. "Our biggest requirement is data analysis, taking information from different parts of our business and bringing it all together so we can compare and measure performance."

When it came time to devise Eastpack's new infrastructure model, the company knew it would have to seek the assistance of business intelligence experts to ensure everything went smoothly. That's what brought Stellar Consulting to Renee's attention.

"We were looking at implementing a system for our Cool-Chain Management System, pulling information from our

inventory system and from temperature data loggers that we have placed in pallets. We scoped out our requirements and went looking for someone who could meet them," she says.

> "We talked to five or six different companies, and Stellar was not only capable of everything we were looking for, it also gave us direction regarding some better alternatives."

Renee Kelly, Business and Systems Analyst

Seeing the benefits with Microsoft PowerBI

Stellar took a good look at not only Eastpack's immediate requirements for real-time monitoring and analysis of sensor-based fruit quality data but also their avenues for growth and analysis in the future. With this broader view, Microsoft PowerBI was a natural choice.

According to Renee, the interactive and intuitive visualisations available through PowerBI are having a significant impact across the company.

"Building the visualisations in the front-end for our users, Stellar has given us the training and requirements to be able to achieve our wider business goals.

"We've extended from Cool-Chain into time-out-of-coolstore temperature monitoring and RFID systems. Now, other departments are speaking up, saying they want to be picked for the next project."

Renee says the ability to visualise Eastpack's data using PowerBI is a huge leap forward.

"We have a copious amount of data and information and used to spend a lot of time on spreadsheeting and making graphs. With the Microsoft PowerBI system and Stellar's assistance, it has just opened the data up, made it more visible and given us the tools to better manage the system and processes."

Renee Kelly, Business and Systems Analyst

Guidance throughout the business intelligence journey

Stellar has been there every step of the way as Eastpack's has adopted Microsoft PowerBI, and the team continues to offer support whenever it is required.

"As we've grown they've been really helpful and giving us options of how to do things that would suit our business, and when things get a little more difficult we can go back to them and ask how they would approach something new," says Renee.

"Occasionally when we're doing analysis and the data isn't responding the way we would expect, we've had to go back to Stellar and query on that. There have been a few tweaks in the way the data was originally mined or captured, and they assist with those sort of things. They're very knowledgeable, and if they don't know something they will go and investigate and come back with further details."

Renee is quick to point out that Eastpack's BI journey still has a long way to go, but the company has confidence that the continuing support of Stellar Consulting is a key ingredient of their success.

"Stellar has helped to build that core framework – making a stable environment for all of our business data. We're now looking at our fruit optimisation departments, energy programme, maybe even production-based systems – using Microsoft PowerBI to carry out analysis on that data."

Renee Kelly, Business and Systems Analyst

Microsoft Partner
Gold Data Analytics
Silver Data Platform

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