

COOK Trading Ltd



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Jeff Turner, Head of Finance & IT, COOK Trading Ltd

COOK Trading Ltd was established in 1997 by Edward Perry and Dale Penfold to produce high quality ready-made meals. All the company's frozen ready meals are manufactured without the use of artificial additives and preservatives in their production kitchen in Sittingbourne, Kent.

Having started with just one shop in Farnham, Surrey, COOK Trading Ltd now sells its products through 32 shops, 150+ farmshops and an online delivery business - and has over 300 employees. To meet demand, COOK commenced building work on a £2.5million development for a new kitchen production facility in Sittingbourne in March 2007, which opened in October 2007.

The rapid growth and widespread locations of COOK Trading Ltd's outlets has meant that the company increasingly relies on its IT infrastructure as a key line of communication. "We use an intranet to provide the latest news and information for the regional stores," said Jeff Turner, Head of Finance and IT at Cook Trading Ltd. "We also use the wide area network as an integral part of our accountancy system as sales totals are uploaded

from each outlet daily to our bespoke management system - so it is vital that the service is maintained on a constant basis."

COOK Trading Ltd enlisted the help of Surrey-based outsourced IT specialists ramsac for systems support alongside the company's small in-house team. ramsac has been involved with a number of major IT projects with COOK Trading Ltd, notably a major server upgrade and the transition of IT during a move to the company's new head office.

"It had become apparent that we had outgrown our old infrastructure and required an upgrade to continue the expansion of our IT facilities," explained Turner. "ramsac looked at our needs and gave us a set of suitable options that were available to us."

The new system has given us a stable platform to operate from and one that we find much easier to manage on a day-to-day basis ourselves. We can measure the success by the fact that we now rarely have any of the frustrating log-in problems that had previously caused us a real headache and tied up our IT team."

COOK Trading Ltd's move to new offices in Sittingbourne from the previous location in Tonbridge was another project for which they called upon ramsac's experience and expertise. *"It was a great step forward for the business but also something which filled us with trepidation from an IT point of view, as the central IT systems are integral to the stock replenishment and cash reconciliation processes across the whole company,"* commented Turner. *"We entrusted the move to ramsac and I am delighted to say the move was a dream. We walked in on the Monday following the move and it was as if we had walked back into the Tunbridge office, everything was working perfectly and we were very grateful to the team at ramsac for their hard work and professionalism."*

As Paul Mew, Technical Director for ramsac explained, the IT specialists have seen COOK Trading Ltd grow well beyond their original size since they started working with them: *"It has been a pleasure to work with COOK Trading and see them grow from their one original outlet to having branches across the South East of England. Naturally growth brings greater needs and requirements on the IT provision, so our aim has always been to not only help with specific queries but also advise on the strategic choices that can be made to make the most of the company's IT budget."*

COOK Trading is looking at other possible future IT developments, including EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) across the company's outlets and upgrades to the stock maintenance system. *"ramzac will have a role to play with any ongoing projects as well as guiding our overall IT strategy. ramsac has become an integral part of our IT team and we will continue to rely on them to assist with any technical support requirements that can't be solved in-house,"* concluded Turner.