QK Coldstores

Maximising uptime of business-critical systems

> " *Since Node4 implemented the system, we have not experienced a single outage.* "

The Customer

QK Coldstores Ltd is a wholesale refrigeration and cold storage service provider for the food industry. Its main facility in Marston, Lincolnshire, is a 200,000 square foot refrigerated warehouse and distribution centre that handles deliveries and collections from over 120 trucks every day.

QK Coldstores experiences large volumes of traffic, often seasonal, arriving from major agricultural producing regions, cities, and ferry ports to Continental Europe. At any given time, the cold store may contain perishable food items exceeding £10 million in value.

The Challenge

It is essential that QK Coldstores can keep track of all incoming and outgoing stock, and locate specific consignments at any time. Staff need to be available to check in and unload trucks as soon as they arrive, and readily locate goods that are required for collection.

Haulage drivers must adhere to strict guidelines around consecutive hours worked and multi-stop routes, so there is great pressure to turn around consignments quickly. However, multiple truck arrivals were resulting in backlogs, delays and avoidable extra costs.

To manage these logistics, QK was using a warehouse management software from Chess Logistics Technology alongside a paper-based administration system. The system ran in a Microsoft environment, and required timeintensive manual input controls, which invariably led to errors and costly losses.

This environment often proved to be unstable and unreliable, leading to frequent downtime when staff had to revert to fully paper-based administration, slowing down processes even further.

Darrell Swain, Business Development Manager, said *"Since 2006, when Node4 implemented the Empirica system, QK Coldstores has not experienced a single system outage."*

The Solution

QK Coldstores needed to upgrade to a newer, automated warehouse management system (WMS) and selected Empirica. Node4 played a key role advising on the implementation and configuration of the new system within a Linux environment and also designed a new solution using Red Hat Linux to ensure long-term stability of the WMS.

In 2006, Node4 oversaw the introduction of the new system, providing onsite and offsite support and maintenance. QK also appointed Node4 to provide fully managed services for the WMS, with 24/7 support availability.

The Benefits

The development of a new web-based application by Node4, in 2008, provided numerous additional benefits for QK Coldstores:

- A customer login portal allowing clients to view stock levels and other critical information in real-time

- A Cloud-based system for hauliers and drivers to prebook time slots for the loading bays, ensuring QK staff are available to load or unload trucks immediately on arrival

- Configuring data loss prevention using various replication technologies, ensuring 100 per cent uptime of the WMS by utilising another offsite server

- Custom layers for the Empirica system, including an automatic email alert system to notify hauliers and drivers if an appointment was missed or a driver was running late

The Feedback

An application is only as good as the system that it runs on. Node4 has designed a bespoke environment for Empirica that has required minimal maintenance and support. It just works.

Node4 has been instrumental in helping us eliminate costs for lost goods, increase staffing efficiency and improve our industry reputation. Coming from a system that crashed on a regular basis, to not experiencing a single crash in over nine years, is a phenomenal change.

Darrell Swain, Business Development Manager, QK Coldstores

Key Outcomes:

- **Upgrade to newer, automated system.**

- **New solution designed for long-term stability**

- **No outages since its implementation**

Empowering business to do more

Millennium Way, Pride Park, Derby. DE24 8HZ
T: 0845123 2222   **E:** info@node4.co.uk   **www.node4.co.uk**