



# The search for ERP software tailored to the food industry

CASE STUDY | HELA THISSEN BV

## Customer Details

Hela Thissen BV is a family business from Venlo and distributor of the Hela Spice Ketchup Curry, produced in Germany. In 1967, Harry Thissen laid the foundation for the spice ketchup curry in the Netherlands. Nowadays, the company is run by his son and current managing director Hay Thissen.

## Industry

Food & Beverage

## Aptean Solution

DIN Solutions from Aptean

## Challenges

- In need of information exchange with EDI
- Current system unable to handle the growing demand
- Not possible to make adjustments

## Benefits

- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Insight and transparency in processes
- Better overview and more control

## Hela Thissen BV

The red bottle has become an indispensable part of the product range of Dutch supermarkets, cafeterias and wholesalers. The Hela spice ketchup curry is a market leader of its kind.

In addition to the consumer market, Hela Thissen is also active in the business-to-business market. The spices are often used in butcheries, bakeries, institutions, hospitality and catering businesses. The food industry also uses the spices. Hela Thissen went from wholesaler to producer and developer of sauces. The company designed its own test kitchen. Here, potential top products are developed by the product development department. One of the products that has been developed in the kitchen is the dressing line "Salad & Sandwich". Since the summer of 2010, the new production hall for this product line is running on full tilt. Currently, the company has 38 employees.

## Our strength: enjoy and innovate!

To the question of where the strength of the company lies, Hay Thissen responds: "In the food sector, three core indicators are health, convenience and joy. Health and convenience are high on the list for most companies. We focus much more on enjoyment; enjoy the product, enjoy the flavor and eat it again."

Jean-Pierre Verhasselt adds: "We are also a relatively small organization. Therefore, we can quickly and flexibly go along with developments and changing needs. I think that is also very important. Short lines and innovativeness; trying out new products and new variations to steadily increase our market share."

## Quality and food safety

Food safety is a given at Hela. All working methods comply with the legal HACCP hygiene regulations. Moreover, the company is BRC and IFS certified. These hygiene quality marks are issued by independent organizations if a company fully complies with the high standards. The quality system contains the entire business process. This already starts with checking the commodities upon receipt, monitoring the quality during production and the microbiological release when delivering an order. The communication with the customer is transparent. Every question, complaint or point of improvement is processed carefully.

All efforts result in an annual production of 6 million bottles of Hela curry, and approximately 280,000 kilos of dressing, produced in Venlo.

## Flexibility in standard ERP package

As a consequence of the transformation from trading company to producer, the current system was soon unable to handle the growing demand. "Previously, we worked with AFAS, a DOS package that worked just fine. However, as our activities expanded, we realized that the package could no longer meet our demands due to the relatively inflexible environment. It was not possible to make adjustments. This was reason for us to switch to a more flexible Windows package. Then Microsoft Dynamics NAV came into the picture. In 2003, we started a selection process", says Verhasselt.

"An important requirement for the package was the adjustability. In addition, it was important that the package was able to support the complexity of our business processes in a flexible way without too much customization. This is because we supply and invoice to many different types of businesses. After using GAC for 4 years, we finally switched to DIN Solutions. DIN has its own food add-on, where many of the matters that we used to have customized, were already included in the standard package. Think of quality management, discount structures, EDI according to the foods convention and product specification management. Moreover, they had a pragmatic approach; they advised us about the design based on knowledge and experience from the branch. In 2008, we started the 4.0 version of DIN solutions and in 2011 we finally switched to NAV 2009."

"DIN Food gives us the flexibility to go along with the ever-changing demands of our customers."

## Flawless implementation

Hela is satisfied with the collaboration with DIN Solutions: "both implementations were virtually flawless. Both the implementation of the package in 2008 and the upgrade to NAV 2009 in 2011. Despite the upgrade taking a little longer than expected, we were satisfied with the process." The switch from supplier GAC to DIN Solutions did bring some challenges. "Converting the data was not easy, because we also got a new NAV version. The entire hospitality add-on of our previous partner GAC was gone, but all that data still had to be copied in the branch solution of DIN Solutions. In the end, this transition went satisfactorily and within the calculated and agreed time period." says Jean-Pierre.

Hela is satisfied with the use of the solution. Suzanne van Kimmenade, Head of Administration at Hela, explains: "DIN Food is a pleasant package to work with: it is user friendly, intuitive and logically designed. Also our automatic management reports are perfectly put together with Jet Reports. The biggest difference with the old system is closing the periods. This is a nightmare in most packages and leads to a lot of stress every month, but I have to say: with DIN Food we never have problems."

## A market in motion

After the implementation, DIN Food started playing an increasingly important role in supporting the business processes of Hela. Many developments such as batch registration, pallet administration and SSCC labeling are all incorporated in DIN Food without any issues. Also the product specification management is fully under control with DIN Food: with the touch of a button, the customer is provided with the latest specifications aligned with the product range they order.

“Where we had just one product previously, the famous Hela curry, we now have a much broader range and our own production line. If we look at our buyer’s market, we see that the power of retail is increasingly important for our product range. At the end of the day, they determine the price and where on the shelf the products will be placed. We make agreements with each of our buyers on price, discounts, promotion possibilities, etc. Naturally, this has a large influence on how we design our processes and handle cost management, since the margins in retail are often much smaller and buyers set specific requirements with regard to information exchange (EDI). We try to absorb this with quantity and critically reviewing our internal processes to realize optimal cost efficiency. DIN Food supports us by providing an insight and transparency and enabling us to carry out our daily activities efficiently.”

## Future

Since the commissioning of DIN Food, Hela was able to realize substantial efficiency gains. “If we would not have automated our business processes, the growth of our product range and our organization would not have gone so smoothly. It would have taken our back office much more time to register everything correctly”, says Jean-Pean Verhasselt.

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**Jean-Pean Verhasselt**  
Administrative Assistant

Looking to the future, Verhasselt observes that information provision is becoming more and more important. “Not only internally, but definitely also to our buyers and the end user. A frequently asked question is information provision surrounding product data. The label regulations play an important role in this information provision. We have to put more and more information on our labels. By managing all this information centrally in DIN Food and since DIN Solutions is actively following and going along with developments in the food market, we are able to anticipate on future developments with the necessary flexibility. With DIN Food, we found a solution that suits the gradual growth and ambitions of our organization.”



DIN Solutions is part of the Aptean family of mission-critical, industry-specific software solutions. Aptean’s purpose-built ERP and supply chain management solutions help address the unique challenges facing process and discrete manufacturers, distributors, and other focused organizations. Aptean’s compliance solutions are built for companies serving specific markets such as finance, healthcare, biotech and pharmaceuticals. Over 4,500 organizations in more than 20 industries across 54 countries trust Aptean’s solutions at their core to assist with running their operations. To learn more about Aptean and the markets we serve, [www.aptean.com](http://www.aptean.com).