



CUSTOMER

Chadwicks Group

CHALLENGE

Requirement for high-speed and high-volume processing of data to digitally transform internal and external operations

SOLUTION

InterSystems data platform

OUTCOME

Moving from legacy IT to a cloud-first ecosystem that allows data to flow seamlessly to the point of action, increasing customers' and partners' interaction through digital channels

InterSystems Provides the Building Blocks for Chadwicks Group's Digital Transformation

Chadwicks Group, Ireland's leading builders' merchant and home improvement specialist has been in operation for 200 years, selling builders' and plumbers' supplies to both trade and DIY customers from over 50 branches nationwide with over 1,300 employees.

The group's current growth strategy is built on several strategic pillars, including remaining the first-choice supplier to its customers, refining and developing its range of products and services, developing an innovative and efficient multi-specialist and multi-channel business, and increasing its e-commerce capabilities.

To support these goals, Chadwicks created a blueprint for a transformative IT project to turn technology into a source of value for the group by enhancing efficiency and increasing customers' and external partners' interaction through digital channels.

Over the last three decades, a wide range of disparate IT systems were adopted in response to evolving business needs, which has contributed to internal data silos, disjointed processes, and a lack of agility, or single source of truth from data.

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Head of IT,
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Previously, Chadwicks built its own enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, known as Accustar, on InterSystems technology which has accumulated significant intelligence since its inception. The distributed legacy system was outfitted with a number of improvements over the years, and the infrastructure was in need of modernization to enable the ERP to become a core system of record which could be surrounded by an array of new and legacy best-of-breed applications.

Due to the complex, mission-critical integration requirements, Chadwicks undertook rigorous market research and evaluation to find an intelligent platform to identify, collect, transform, and normalise data across the disparate systems. As it turns out, they didn't have to look far.

During performance testing, InterSystems became the clear choice to facilitate Chadwicks Group's requirement for high-speed and high-volume processing of data.

With this infrastructure, Chadwicks would gain the flexibility to select the best product to meet current business requirements, as well as the agility to rapidly adapt to emerging opportunities.

Liberating Data from Silos

During 2019, four separate merchanting brands were consolidated under the Chadwicks Group brand. The consolidation created a golden opportunity to update the company's systems and processes, enabling a customer to purchase from any of the brands – or its 50 distributed branches – using a single account. This required integrating several best-of-breed solutions within the central ERP. What's more, real-time exchanges of complex information between an array of new and legacy systems required a platform which could accommodate all types of standards from web services to JSON and FTP.

Colm Scannell, Head of IT, Chadwicks Group, said, “Moving from siloed legacy IT systems to a modern cloud-first, best-in-class ecosystem that allows data to flow seamlessly to the point of action is a key strategic initiative for us, so it was important to get the foundations right. Chadwicks has a long history of making it easier for time-strapped customers to do business with us. Having data flowing seamlessly will improve responsiveness and allow customers' expectations to continue to be exceeded.”

Building Workforce Capabilities with Easy-To-Use Tools

As Chadwicks embarked on its digital journey, it recognized developing talent and skills as a critical success factor: “We realized that we would need a modern integration solution that could be readily understood and supported by our own internal IT team.”

InterSystems technology can be used with many popular languages, including Java, .NET, REST, JSON, C++, JavaScript, and XML; the team were able to work in their environments of choice.

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“With InterSystems now a fully live and critical part of our infrastructure, we’re able to rapidly build new solutions, which enables us to get new projects up and running quickly and maintenance is very simple,” Scannell continued.

Graphical tools within InterSystems technology allow Chadwicks Group’s internal IT team to visually diagram processes, transformations, rules, and workflows. This allows them to focus on the logical interactions between systems, rather than coding, resulting in faster development of solutions that meet business requirements and easier modification of existing applications. All data is automatically stored in the embedded database and available for real-time reporting and analysis.

Scannell added, “Moving from siloed legacy IT systems to a modern cloud-first, best-in-class ecosystem which allows data to flow seamlessly to the point of action is a key strategic initiative for us, so it was important to get the foundations right.”

Focusing on Incremental Wins

To win early support, Scannell and his team started with projects that delivered significant short-term rewards with manageable risk. Initial projects focused on improving internal efficiencies by integrating, transforming and creating workflows from existing systems, with three new systems having already gone live:

- Chadwicks Group’s finance department has benefited from a new accounts payable solution to handle high volumes of transactions and will be essential as the company enters the ecommerce space.
- A new mill test reporting (MTR) system provides traceability and assurance to end users about the quality of steel via an inspection certificate that is available to customers on demand. This provides unprecedented convenience and efficiency benefits to customers.
- Leveraging InterSystems technology, Chadwicks has also adopted a new product management system and an electronic proof of delivery solution.

“To ensure a smooth implementation of InterSystems technology, we’ve set regular, manageable milestones and have already seen fast results within our broader, long-term strategy. This has meant we have experienced some of the benefits to our digital journey in the short-term to deliver those back to our customers almost immediately.”

Responsiveness Partner

“We knew we wanted a solution that could be managed, maintained, and modified ourselves, rather than software we couldn’t understand,” commented Scannell. “We looked at a number of solutions to see what was available on the market, but many were complex and would take a lot of time to learn, ultimately delaying our ability to get underway with some of the projects we had planned. Following an initial training from the InterSystems team, our IT team got a fuller understanding of InterSystems data platform’s extensive capabilities.

“InterSystems has allowed us to become more agile, and its reliability, scalability, and performance will be key to our ongoing digital journey.”

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“After this initial insight, we were in the position of selecting InterSystems and we did that with full confidence, quickly realising it would deliver everything the business required.” The initial deployment of InterSystems was carried out by InterSystems Dublin-based systems integration partner, Grapevine, which has implemented the new systems and created the interfaces to connect each solution with Chadwicks’ mission-critical central ERP. “This approach has given us the help we needed to get set up with the technology quickly while giving us the knowledge to take on the platform ourselves and add additional solutions in the future. It’s this strong foundation that has enabled us to start our digital transformation from a solid base,” added Scannell.

The support from InterSystems and Grapevine has ensured that Chadwicks’ internal IT team has been able to focus on the overarching digital strategy and getting the most from its technology, while the experts have taken care of successfully integrating the solutions into the group’s infrastructure.

Looking Ahead

While the building industry was among those badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, Chadwicks Group used this time to plan the expansion of its ecommerce capabilities to become the lead in digital engagement within the industry.

“InterSystems has allowed us to become more agile and its reliability, scalability, and performance will be key to our ongoing digital journey. The uncertainty of this year reinforced our need for agility, and InterSystems data platform will continue to play a critical role as we begin to answer the growing demand for online services among our B2B client-base, including click-and-collect functionalities, and adapt to the changing requirements of our customers and the industry at large. Our end-to-end ecommerce platform will strengthen our operations and is something none of our competitors are currently offering, further cementing our place as Ireland’s leading builders’ merchant,” concluded Scannell.

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