Conagra Brands Improve Efficiency to Speed Global Product Delivery

CONAGRA
· B R A N D S ·

Industry:
Food Processing, Consumer Package Goods (CPG)

Geographies:
Global

Employees:
16,500

Planview Product:

Planview Clarizen™

Planview Solution:
Planview Product Portfolio Management

CHALLENGE

Conagra Brands has a rich heritage of making great food that spans over 100 years; however, a recent slew of new competitors, an explosion of nontraditional retail outlets, and significant technological advancements in the industry made it imperative to transform how it does business. Innovating food products demands a highly cross-functional and collaborative product development process. Conagra needed a solution that would enable PMs across the global organization to efficiently guide product development projects through an intense commercialization process and deliver innovations to market that are on-trend and in demand.

SOLUTION

Planview's Product Portfolio Management solution gave Conagra the tool it needed to connect and engage its workforce across the entire global enterprise, gain real-time visibility throughout the commercialization process, prioritize work, focus resources, and improve efficiency to deliver greater business impact in one highly adaptable, intuitive system.

"Operating in such a siloed environment led to a lack of visibility, excessive meetings that reduced productivity, and disjointed conversations happening outside the context of specific projects"

– Mark Evans, VP of R&D Product Readiness

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About Conagra Brands

While you may not be familiar with the name Conagra, you certainly are familiar with its brands. Their products can be found at retailers in Canada and Mexico, and in over 97% of the households in America and include favorites such as Bird's Eye®, Duncan Hines®, Healthy Choice®, Marie Callendar's®, Slim Jim®, and Orville Redenbacher® – to name a few. Headquartered in Chicago, IL, Conagra Brands operates more than 40 offices and facilities throughout the US and international locations in Canada, China, Mexico, and the Philippines.

Challenge: Increasing Enterprise Capacity in a High Cross-Functional Environment

The substantial growth of e-commerce in the food industry has played a significant role in driving innovation, which in many cases can create an imbalance between new ideas and an organization's capacity to commercialize those ideas. With the entry of new companies and business models intensifying competition in the food industry, the ability to bring innovative products to market with speed is more important than ever.

In addition, now that the food industry has caught up with the rest of the world in the digital revolution, it has led to an explosion of product attribute data requirements from all major retailers. The increased focus on data adds an additional layer of complexity to balancing new consumer-focused ideas and solutions with production capacity.

"Prior to 2015, a food manufacturer like us could take a product to market and trade with retailers using a very limited set of operational data. All we needed to have was our UPC code, (and our) packaging dimensions; that's it. We could onboard a new product into those retailers with just that basic information," says Mark Evans, VP of R&D Product Readiness at Conagra. "Now there are over 200 – 250 plus data attributes that we need to have ready when we launch a new product into the market."

For Conagra Brands, bringing new products to market begins with collecting data on more than 150 food categories and conducting a deep dive into industry trends from consumer behavior to store purchase activity. These findings are then used to form an objective, holistic perspective of the market and guide decision-making on 3,500 active projects in a highly cross-functional commercialization process. R&D, food design, packaging, engineers, food safety, microbiology, food labeling, product lifecycle management, demand science, brand marketing, supply chain, transportation, warehouse, and procurement must all work in synergy to bring a new product to life.

Although Conagra did have PPM software in place, it was more of a financial tool as opposed to something that project managers could use. This left PMs using multiple tools on various platforms and myriad shared drives of critical information that could only be communicated through email and instant messaging. Operating in such a siloed environment led to a lack of visibility, excessive meetings that reduced productivity, and disjointed conversations happening outside the context of specific projects.

Solution: Improve Speed to Market with a Direct Line of Sight from Strategy to Delivery

Looking to contemporize Conagra's business processes, Mark and his team initiated the search for a solution that would improve visibility, enhance collaboration, serve as a single source of truth to [enhance] cross-functional alignment, and ultimately, increase speed to market.

It was vital to drive efficiency at Conagra that whatever tool they landed on be centered around helping the core teams do their work instead of something leadership forced into the workflow. Value had to drive adoption.

Mark was confident they had found what they were looking for when introduced to Planview's Product Portfolio Management solution based on its capabilities to connect and engage a workforce across an entire global enterprise, offer real-time visibility, extend accountability to get work done, improve accessibility to all project information, and improve efficiency with automated workflows presenting Project Managers with a direct line of sight from strategy to delivery.

Together with their Planview® partners, Mark and his team initiated a bottom-up implementation strategy galvanized by a network of 55 employee champions supporting 1,400 potential users. Better able to anticipate the unique needs of their local colleagues, these champions were able to build customized training content directly within the Planview solution and provide opportunities for users to ask questions, make requests, and receive feedback.

Keeping everything in one system and focusing on the desired outcome of engagement enabled Conagra to tailor the Planview solution to the characteristics of its core teams, driving widespread organic adoption. Global teams now have the end-to-end connectivity necessary to manage and complete a broad portfolio of projects across timelines, product lines, and interdependencies while providing senior leadership with real-time visibility into project health throughout the commercialization process.

Results: What Do Actionable Insights From a Single Source Get You?

Harnessing the powerful capabilities of Planview's Product Portfolio Management solution means Conagra now has access to what Mark calls "an unimaginable amount of data in just a few clicks." Conagra can now keep track of everything in one place, from brands to projects down to the individual plants and the 5,000 ingredients and 20,000 packaging materials they contain.

The real benefit lies in the efficiency and cost savings gained in only touching a product once. There can be multiple concurrent enterprise projects for a single product/SKU. Lacking this level of visibility into the portfolio of projects before implementing Planview meant that the company "might have changed packaging six times over the next year and a half to execute these six projects," shared Mark. "Now, project managers can coordinate these changes, making it easier in the plant and reducing the amount of waste." Having instant access to this information drives efficiency and productivity with fewer and more efficient meetings focused on healthy debates, discussions, and alignments instead of wasting valuable time with status updates.

Future: Unlocking New Ways to Measure Value

As Conagra looks to build on the value derived from Planview's solution, subsequent phases will introduce resource capacity planning and data readiness measuring – a systematic, task-oriented way to track how the product attribute data to support product launches are progressing alongside the physical creation of the product.

"Value can be measured in a lot of different ways," says Mark. "We want it to be about executing work, innovating products, and renovating our portfolio. Having a dashboard that's objective and based in reality – that's tremendously exciting!"