



Making Aunt Bessie lean and mean

Looking at the brand logo you might think that the sturdy figure of Aunt Bessie suggests a liking for her own Yorkshire puddings. Yet Aunt Bessie's takes the concept of lean much more seriously for her manufacturing processes.

From state-of-the-art food facilities in Hull, the Aunt Bessie's brand of frozen food products has taken the market by storm. The fastest growing food brand in the UK, Aunt Bessie's Yorkshire Puddings are manufactured to the tune of 6 million per day in addition to the production of a wide range of other products including stuffing balls, pancakes, biscuits, sponges, pies, and hot puddings.

With her hair tied in an old-fashioned bun, Aunt Bessie seems to have been with us since we were kids, yet in reality the brand was only launched in 1995. Today, with the resurgence of frozen food and ringing endorsements from celebrity chef, Delia Smith, the Aunt Bessie's brand has a retail value in excess of £170 million (2008) and an annual growth rate of over 9%, compared to just the 1.1% average across the frozen food sector. Aunt Bessie's continues to aim high, believing that the brand will reach £250 million in 2012 as consumer demand for traditional, additive free and high-quality convenient foods continues to grow.



Manufacturing for growth

In 2004, Tryton Foods (as the company was previously known), embarked on a programme of Continuous Improvement, and set out to create a single change agenda as a core business process across all management levels. To drive the programme, Aunt Bessie's decided to measure and use overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) as the vehicle to identify losses and quantify improvements. The business motivation for the Operational Excellence programme included:

Survival of the Fittest - combatting the rising cost of inputs and margin erosion due to retailer pressure.

Growth, driving the need for increased flexibility - adopting of new technologies to adapt to the increasing pace of innovation.

Driving a culture of change - breaking inertia and encouraging development

Harnessing Technology

To support this programme, the Idhammar OEE System was installed across the Hull operational sites for Aunt Bessie's in-house manufacturing. Stuart Drysdale, Manufacturing Director at Aunt Bessie's explains;

"We chose the Idhammar OEE System for a number of reasons; firstly, it had a proven track record in the food industry and had many of the features we were looking for to support drill-down analysis, reporting and continuous improvement monitoring. Moreover, despite its extensive functionality, the straight-forward user interface allows the system to be used by anyone in the plant and supports our culture of ownership and responsibility. Idhammar's OEE System also has a complementary Maintenance Management System."



Aunt Bessie's approach

There is a firm belief at Aunt Bessie's that maintenance has to be a part of any production improvement programme. Idhammar's CMMS software provides coordinated maintenance schedules, controls spares and stock levels and records critical jobs and materials requirements. The system supports Aunt Bessie's predictive maintenance programmes, reducing unplanned stoppages and ensuring labour and materials are used more effectively. Integrated TPM and OEE initiatives thus underpin the key elements of the Operational Excellence programme:

- Consistent use of process data using OEE to report, review, act
- TPM single-point lessons (short training documents) for each specific topic
- Establish clear priorities driven by the major losses identified by OEE
- Use teams to establish new processes and standards and pilot before roll-out

The proof of the pudding...

The following chart shows actual OEE performance improvements across a range of production lines between August 2006 and August 2007. Aunt Bessie's has calculated that 1% of OEE improvement across every line is worth around £150,000 of savings per year:

LINE	INCREASE IN OEE OVER 12 MONTHS
Sasib1	+38%
Sasib2	+22%
Sasib3	+24%
Gyro1	+14%
Gyro2	+28%
Pie Line	+37%
Ishida	+47%

Beyond an OEE score

One of the rules at Aunt Bessie's is to convert losses to cash in order to make them visible. In the same way, they are able to measure the profitability improvements gained by each percentage improvement in OEE. As Stuart Drysdale concludes;

"Using OEE as part of our Operational Excellence Programme is far more than a theoretical exercise. The intelligent functionality of the OEE system highlights losses, drives our improvement agenda and leads to improved effectiveness, a better working environment and savings to the bottom line. Our minimum improvement last year was 14% and our best was 47%, so the system paid for itself in a couple of months."

Aunt Bessie's is already considering the use of automated data entry to provide real-time manufacturing performance updates and support faster decision making; however, for now the combination of lean, TPM, and OEE is clearly delivering impressive results.

“Consistent measurement using the Idhammar OEE software is at the core of our continuous improvement programmes and is supported by Idhammar's CMMS which underpins our TPM initiatives.”

STUART DRYSDALE
MANUFACTURING DIRECTOR
AUNT BESSIE'S

