

Sweets at hyperscale

The past few years have seen a massive consolidation in the global candy market. And Ferrara Candy Company has emerged as a leader in the delivery of delight. With dozens of classic brands under its belt—from Nerds to Laffy Taffy; SweetTARTS to Jujufruits—Ferrara is scaling at rapid pace. So how does this megabrand keep ingredients in stock and manufacturing on track?



CHALLENGE

Evolving to meet massive growth

“Currently, we’re producing over a million pounds of Trolli gummies per week,” reports Stefan Floyhar, Senior IT Manager for IT Infrastructure at Ferrara. And that’s just one product in an ever-expanding line of sweet snacks. In fact, Ferrara recently added the Keebler brand of cookies, pie crusts and ice cream cones to its portfolio. “We’re going to have 19 manufacturing facilities online in the U.S. and Mexico by the end of the year,” Floyhar explains. Dealing with massive, triple-digit growth, Ferrara was quickly outgrowing its IT infrastructure. “When we experience a critical system outage, we don’t invoice, we don’t accept orders, and we can’t ship product,” Floyhar says. “And if our SAP production system goes down for four hours, there is a definite cost that goes with that.”

SOLUTION

Not all AI is created equal

To gain control over its rapidly growing IT environment and get its manufacturing pipeline back on track, Ferrara realized one particular requirement was absolutely necessary. “When we really got down to what we were looking for, the number one piece was ease of administration,” Floyhar says. “The second piece was to get some kind of AI or predictive analytics to give us visibility into why our applications were performing poorly.” Ultimately, the team at Ferrara turned to Sayers Technology—a 2017 HPE U.S. partner of the year—for guidance. Together they looked for a solution that incorporated both ease of use and AI in their DNA. “We had a demo of HPE Nimble Storage that opened our eyes,” Floyhar says. “They gave us an InfoSight demo that showed us real-life anonymized statistics from other users of SAP on the Nimble platform and what their performance actually looked like. Nobody else’s AI could do that—nobody else’s AI can do what InfoSight does.”

RESULTS

AI that transforms the support experience

Reimagining what to expect from IT has changed the way the team thinks about business, and about work. “We’ve definitely turned a corner,” Floyhar relates. “We’ve gone from reactive firefighting to proactive monitoring.” Work hours for the IT team are now becoming more manageable. “An engineer who sleeps is an engineer who thinks better. And an engineer that thinks better can deliver better outcomes for the end user.” The business is better for it. “Now with Nimble InfoSight predictive analytics, we have the ability to stop focusing on the infrastructure and think about what really matters to the business. Increasingly, our infrastructure can self-manage.” And when additional support is needed, it’s there, courtesy of the Nimble support team. “We had a virtual machine performance issue affecting our SAP system that we couldn’t figure out,” relates Floyhar. “We had VMware and Nimble support on the phone—the VMware tech kept insisting the problem was on the storage, and our Nimble support tech said it wasn’t.” The scenario escalated. “But when the Nimble support tech retrieved the AI data from InfoSight, the tone of the conversation changed completely—he shared the data and the VMware tech could see it was a VMware bug. We spent 9 hours on the phone figuring this out, but if we hadn’t, we could have had a 24-hour outage.” For Floyhar and team, it was proof that HPE wasn’t just trying to win a support argument—it was trying to win for Ferrara. “That was huge. That was impactful. The Nimble team is the best support organization I’ve worked with in 20 years of IT.”

“Nobody else’s AI can do what HPE InfoSight does.”

- Stefan Floyhar, Senior IT Manager for IT Infrastructure at Ferrara Candy



BY THE NUMBERS

35

Iconic candy and chocolate brands under one roof

6-figure

Costs avoided by preventing SAP system downtime

TRENDS

A planet with a sweet tooth

With new studies delivering conflicting results, sales may be the only way to gauge how much candy we really eat. Take Millennials, for instance. Confectionary News reports that the generation is abandoning sweets for healthier snacks. But Winsight found that Millennials actually purchase more prepared foods and sweets than other generations. Who are we supposed to believe? For those who tend to put more trust in spreadsheets than studies, the business of candy is on an upward trajectory. Chocolate tops the sector with more than \$14b in sales, but there’s almost a percentage point of gain for non-chocolate candy at \$7.4b. Sugarless chocolate, in particular, is soaring with an almost 20% increase in sales in the last 12 months.

SOLUTION RECIPE

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