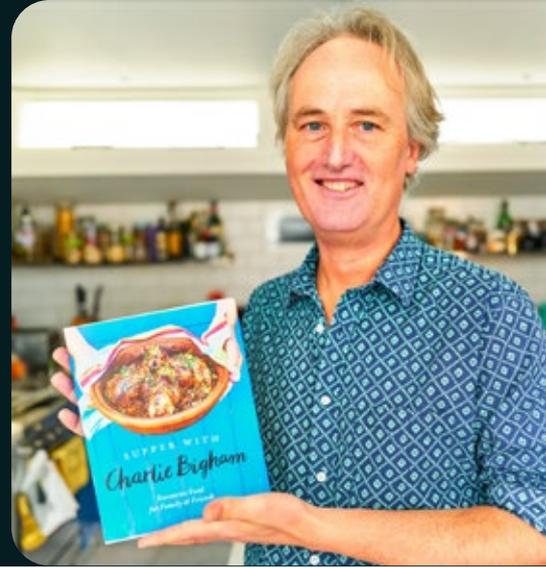


Charlie Bigham's: A recipe for digital transformation with Syspro



Customer Profile

For almost thirty years, Charlie Bigham's has been blazing a trail as the UK's premium provider of pre prepared meals. From humble beginnings, quite literally making home cooked meals to sell locally from Charlie's home kitchen, the company now boasts 600+ staff across two UK kitchens and produces more than 50 different dishes. All are cooked just like you would at home, hand-prepared using fresh, high-quality ingredients and distributed via the nation's favourite supermarkets.

With annual sales topping £130 million, a string of business and food awards to its name and a Certified B-Corp, Charlie Bigham's is not a company that stays still. Strategic vision and innovation are central to success and nowhere is that more apparent than in its approach to technology.

Having utilised Syspro ERP for well over a decade, the company was coming towards end-of-life with version 7, so Bigham's looked again to Syspro and implementation partner HIT Technology to deliver an upgrade to version 8. But this was far more than just a modernisation of the software.

What the organisation undertook was a transformation of the entire digital backbone known internally as 'Project Integr8'. The goal was to enhance security, reliability and integrations, and to unlock new possibilities for future innovation.

Out with the old, in with the cloud

Project Integr8 was about creating a modern, secure platform that could seamlessly connect all areas of the business," explains Mike Calverley, Bigham's Head of IT. "It wasn't just limited to the core ERP software."

Instead, Bigham's took the opportunity to replace a web of legacy tools with modern cloud-based solutions across the board. This included a cloud-based EDI for order and invoice processing and a cloud-labelling solution.

Central to this was the replacement of existing middleware with the BPA Platform from Codeless Platforms. "Before the upgrade, our integrations were handled using legacy middleware that could be troublesome to manage and offered less flexibility than we needed," continues Mike.

The new platform now facilitates seamless data flows between Syspro and key business systems and each upgrade reduced reliance on vulnerable, outdated infrastructure and brought the business significant benefits.

Charlie Bigham's

Region

United Kingdom

Key Challenge

Charlie Bigham's struggled with an outdated ERP, fragile integrations, frequent IT issues, and security limitations that hindered agility and operational efficiency

Key Benefit

Upgrading to a modern cloud-based tools delivered stronger security, seamless integrations, faster and more accurate operations, and a scalable foundation for data-driven decision-making

Industry

Food and Beverage

End User Market

Retail & Food Service

Solution

Syspro 8

A separate project to implement Indigo's Warehouse Management System (WMS) was also made possible thanks to the BPA Platform and Project Integr8. This enabled the company to overhaul goods handling across functions including goods-in and finished goods right through to dispatch.

With order data from supermarket customers, recipe management, labelling and warehousing all now completed faster and more accurately, the company has achieved measurable improvements in performance and operational resilience.

"Previously our team spent too much time firefighting," says Mike. "High priority IT support issues, often around how data was moving between systems – accounted for a disproportionate amount of resource. Project Integr8 has fundamentally changed how we operate and spend our time."

As Andrew Longland, Managing Director at HIT Technology reflects, Bigham's previous setup left little room for agility or forward planning. "Syspro 7 had reached a point where legacy systems were layered on top of legacy systems. Every requirement for a new integration or feature inevitably meant a bit of a sticking plaster approach which was clearly unsustainable. With Syspro 8 and the BPA Platform now in place, the business can far more easily adopt new solutions which is a key enabler for Bigham's roadmap of data projects."



Taking users on the journey

For a business with operations running around the clock and 50 Syspro users, the implementation needed to be well planned and executed. To ensure minimal disruption, a team of super-users was established, representing departments from across the business.

Working alongside the HIT Technology team and an in-house change manager, Bigham's carried out extensive process mapping and business readiness assessments. While the underlying technology changed dramatically, the user experience remained largely consistent.

"Most of our users didn't see big changes day-to-day and that was by design," says Sarah Elliot, Change and Programme Manager for Bigham's. "We focussed on keeping interfaces familiar and preserving existing workflows wherever possible, unless there was a strong case for change." That balance between continuity and progress helped ensure a smooth transition for Syspro users.

That user-focussed mindset extended beyond the ERP software. One of the most tangible benefits of the new warehouse management system (WMS) is the usability for warehouse staff. "The new WMS sends instructions directly to handheld scanners," says Sarah. "It tells staff exactly what to pick, in what quantity, and where to find it. That reduces errors, improves efficiency and ultimately saves money, all of which is underpinned by Project Integr8"

Operational gains from a place of security

The technical upgrade also supported major progress in cyber security. "We weren't able to achieve Cyber Essentials Plus with the old infrastructure," notes Mike. "But with Syspro 8 in the cloud, we've now got both certification and appropriate cyber insurance. That's a massive reassurance for the business and our executive team."

Given the increasing threat landscape facing food manufacturers, the move to a secure, compliant ERP environment was a strategic necessity – not just a technical preference.

What's next on the menu?

This new digital foundation has kickstarted the launch of Bigham's ambitious Information Revolution programme. This business-wide initiative is focussed on collecting, structuring and analysing data from every corner of the organisation. Using Microsoft Fabric and Power BI Copilot, the team is loading both transactional and unstructured data into a common environment for real-time analysis and reporting.

"We've already built dashboards for our sales and marketing team," explains Mike. "And now that the platform is in place, we'll start loading more data in priority order."

With accurate and structured data, the business can begin to explore advanced reporting, forecasting and AI-assisted decision-making. "This is about more than technology – it's about giving our people the tools and insights they need to make better decisions," says Mike.

A people focussed approach

At every stage, the emphasis has been on enabling people to improve and grow. For a company built on hand-crafted meals, automation has to complement what makes the brand special, as Sarah underlines. "While our output is considerable in terms of meals produced, the human touch remains central to how we prepare our meals - making our dishes by hand, prioritising the highest quality, isn't something we would ever compromise. The right technology stack simply enables us to do so faster and more efficiently."

That ethos informed every decision in the transformation project – from the selection of the WMS to the design of the Syspro user experience. And with a scalable, secure cloud platform now at the core of the business, Bigham's is well placed to meet rising demand without sacrificing quality, freshness or character.

From the outside, the changes may not be obvious. But behind the scenes, Bigham's has revolutionised how it operates. "Project Integr8 gave us the platform to grow, with Syspro 8 at the core," says Mike. "It's made us safer, more connected, and ready for whatever's next."



About Syspro

Syspro is built specifically for manufacturing and distribution. Our ERP gives you a modern cloud platform with AI capabilities and decades of industry expertise, designed to keep your operations running efficiently and profitably, while you focus on growth. With Syspro, you can gain real-time supply chain visibility, automate order-to-cash to free working capital, and ensure traceability and compliance by design. From family-owned businesses to some of the world's most established manufacturers, our customers have grown with Syspro for decades. With faster time-to-value, local implementation support, and solutions shaped around your industry, you can concentrate on building your business while we help it run smarter and faster.

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