

Birds (Derby) Ltd

Case Study



The Client

Birds (Derby) Ltd has been baking for almost a century. Priding itself on having grown with the times, Birds has never allowed modernisation in the pursuit of efficiency to destroy its quality and its craft bakery heritage. In fact, this family-run business boasts of still using the traditional techniques that have been the making of it.

Birds enjoyed a period of considerable expansion in the 1980s and 1990s. When Retail Manager Mike Holling joined the business in 1991, it had 32 shops. In 2010, Birds has just opened its 50th. All its shops are located in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire, with the bakery and head office remaining in Derby. The company's strength comes from staying regional and keeping close to the culture of the East Midlands. The business now employs 650 staff, of which 500 in the retail estate. "Some have been with us for forty years," observes Mike.

The primary product range is bread, confectionery, savouries and celebration cakes. Large orders, buffet food and celebration cakes can be ordered online. Birds' range of take-away foods, sandwiches, hot savouries and coffees is offered under the Espresso brand. For customers wanting to relax in a comfortable setting, there are tearooms in eight of the stores.



"Our investment in J2 technology has reduced our cost of ownership, both in purchase and maintenance terms."

Mike Holling, Retail EPOS Manager at Birds (Derby) Ltd.

The Solution

The Process

Up until the Millennium, Birds had operated with simple NCR cash registers in the shops. Says Mike Holling: "In 2001, we looked at quite a few systems. We needed something that was reliable and robust for our front-of-house operations and which produced good reports in the back-office. Given our staff profile, whatever we selected had to be easy to handle. Each system we looked at just did not fit our requirements or meet up to our expectations in terms of reliability or functionality."

That year, Mike and his colleagues met up with J2 Retail Systems' UK Sales Director, Richard Heitmann. The meeting took place just prior to

Birds opening a new shop in Derby. "It was clear that J2 hardware fitted our criteria perfectly and was already being very successfully used in the bakery sector. Richard offered us the Javelin Viper product on pilot."

Richard Heitmann then introduced Mike Holling to software house Cratos Hospitality. Cratos provides hardware, software and services exclusively for the catering and hospitality sectors, with solutions supporting both food service and food retailing. The partnership was brokered there and then and, in August 2001, Birds' new shop at Irongate in Derby city centre installed Javelin Viper units running Cratos software.

The Benefits

- J2 and Cratos have unbeatable credentials in the bakery sector
- Birds has come to rely on smooth systems implementation from the team
- The units are well regarded for their professional look, small footprint and large display
- Fanless operation delivers silent performance, is hygienic in the dusty bakery environment, and increases reliability
- The option for pole mounting has enabled Birds to optimise counter space
- Exceptional reliability and a 3-year warranty give Birds a predictable and low cost of ownership

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The Results

"The system worked and gave us the confidence to roll out Javelin Vipers across the business. Before the end of that year, we'd rolled out to 15 shops as our first phase. By the end of the following year, 45 shops were up and running with J2s. We had no issues with implementation or with training. All the installations went smoothly and staff took to the new system very well, which was important to us."

In 2007, Birds decided to take advantage of a machine that J2 had recently launched. This was the J2 580, a fault tolerant PC-based touchscreen that delivers high-performance processing for the larger applications that are increasingly run at point-of-sale. Comments Mike: *"We decided to test out the J2 580 in a shop that was having a refit. Once again, we had no problems. A number of units were installed and it all went extremely well."*

"We've been pleased with the J2 580s," says Mike. *"The units look good. Whilst they have a very small footprint, the bigger screen has made it quicker and user-friendlier for our staff to use. Flexible mounting and a 95degree screen tilt have been useful too."* Staff have found the fanless machines

completely quiet at point-of-sale and ideal for the bakery environment, with its flour dust-laden atmosphere and stringent hygiene requirements. *"This has made for a very reliable, low-maintenance unit for us,"* Mike states.

Keen to keep ahead of the curve, Birds recently decided to replace its Javelin Vipers with J2's latest unit, the J2 615, as part of a full upgrade plan. This innovative, fanless machine delivers virtually maintenance-free performance, making it supremely cost-effective.

Both the J2 580 and J2 615 have impressed Mike Holling by having all the technology contained in the 'head'. *"This looks a lot more professional on the counter, and has enabled us to select either counter mounting or pole mounting. We prefer pole mounting. This latest model looks extremely good,"* adds Mike. *"It's quiet and completely adaptable to our environment. When Richard suggested this latest model, we could see it was the right decision to make."*

Once again, this new J2 unit has received very good acceptance instore and has given Birds a

painless upgrade. At present, Birds has a total of 115 J2 machines installed, distributed amongst its fifty shops at the rate of one to three per shop, with five in one shop only. Work will continue until all Birds' premises have the J2 615 installed.

"Touchscreen technology works so well at point-of-sale," enthuses Mike. *"Now it's so affordable, I'm surprised other companies have not gone down this route. We've found our investment in J2 technology has reduced our cost of ownership, both in purchase and maintenance terms. We have a 3-year warranty and, with this latest model, there's even less to go wrong so we feel very confident."*

Birds are pleased, too, to see how well the Cratos Hospitality EPoS software works on all the J2 units. *"Their Windows®-based software takes care of our head-office and front of house, in store operating needs. It runs well on J2's latest machines. Really, it's been a very successful partnership between the three companies,"* concludes Mike Holling. *"It's worked extremely well."*

www.birdsbakery.com

About J2 Retail Systems

J2 Retail Systems is a specialist manufacturer of PC-based touchscreens, LCD touchscreen monitors and point-of-sale hardware to the retail, hospitality and leisure industries. With 70,000+ units installed worldwide, its clients include hundreds of leading-brand and independent retailers, hospitality and leisure operators including cinema chains, and countless pubs, hotels and restaurants.

By controlling its own design and manufacture, J2 has built a reputation for innovation, reliability and cost-effectiveness. Credited with introducing 'thin client' EPoS to the market, J2 uses emergent technologies wherever possible. In another recent market coup, it launched the first EPoS to contain Solid State storage drives as standard. By so doing, it has once again reset the benchmark for EPoS performance, low maintenance and cost of ownership.

About Cratos Hospitality

Cratos Hospitality Services Ltd offers a turnkey solution for hospitality businesses. The company supplies computer hardware, point-of-sale hardware, its own software suite, hardware support and a 24/7 helpdesk to, amongst others, restaurants, pubs, clubs, hotels, bakeries, coffee shops and nightclubs.

Cratos' comprehensive systems manage all business aspects, including front-of-house, staffing, timekeeping, inventory, restaurant management, property management and accounts. Its systems are delivered as complete solutions, backed up by helpdesk and hardware support, to ensure that Cratos' clients enjoy optimum business performance.

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