



Case Study

ERIKS and Weetabix

ERIKS

Let's make industry work better



Weetabix is an iconic brand and the sheer volume of product that it makes at its Burton Latimer and Corby sites is dizzying. The Weetabix brand has 12 lines, and on average each produces 72 dozen biscuits per minute. That's 864 biscuits per minute per line or 622, 080 biscuits per hour or 14,929,920 each day! The sites also produce Weetabix minis, Alpen, Ready Brek, Weetos and Alpen bars as well as Weetabix on the go drinks.

That's a huge amount of production to maintain and the Weetabix engineering and maintenance team numbers some 150 people, supported by 40 contractors and 12 ERIKS staff who are based 'OnSite' and who are responsible for all purchasing and engineering product spend through a 24h store at Burton Latimer and a day shift store in Corby.

ERIKS and Weetabix go back a long time with ERIKS' team first coming onto the sites (OnSite) to run the engineering stores more than 20 years ago. In fact, despite putting the contract out to tender on seven different occasions as part of their robust purchasing procedure, ERIKS has won the OnSite contract on all but one of the last seven occasions. You could say they are 'Cereal Winners'...

ERIKS and Weetabix signed a new 5-year contract in 2017, and in December 2022, with the contract renewal on the horizon, there was a feeling on both sides that a fresh approach was needed.

According to Julia Mullar, Director of Operations "We wanted to challenge the relationship as we were finding it difficult to implement the innovative ideas which we were putting forward. No-one likes to change, and we wanted to take a fresh approach. We were suffering from what I term 'the curse of the incumbent supplier' where we were pigeon-holed just for our sourcing specialist services and not our integration specialist services."



Common goals

Prior to the contract renewal and Adrian De-Gare Pitt, ERIKS' Regional Operations Manager began working closely with Sava Mirkovic, Weetabix's Facilities Manager on aligning their businesses strategies and partnering more than previously. Sava summarises the situation, "For me it was about ensuring we had common goals and looking at what Weetabix was doing in the future and what was needed from ERIKS to support that."

An important point contextually is that Weetabix had made some changes to its engineering strategy, moving from a set-up, where engineers work as part of a business unit to a centralised engineering function. "So," according to Sava, "the strategy had changed from how we were working previously. ERIKS' experience was in helping us be successful in that process, and that is what we needed to align on, the new process. At that time, I would say that ERIKS was more independent because they didn't have the direction or the involvement, they

needed to understand our needs. It was about bringing it all together."

Adrian De-Gare Pitt summarises the changes which ERIKS made in order to become more aligned with its customer. "We made some changes within the team to support the demands of the Weetabix engineering community, implementing processes that ensured that what we call 'Priority 1's' - which are line stoppers or have the potential to be line stoppers - have certain service levels in place to meet the expectations of the engineers. Those requests, which nine times out of ten relate to a product that sits outside of the scope of what is kept in the stores, were prioritised over and above everything. ERIKS would speak to potential suppliers and ensure the engineers were kept up to date with progress so that they could make decisions around price, delivery times and we would track, monitor and measure the response time to those requests."



Culturally aligned

One fresh aspect of the relationship between ERIKS and Weetabix is that there is a greater level of communication, and the partners celebrate those successes where they have worked together to overcome a potentially sticky problem. “In the past we were really bad at telling people how good we were”, says Adrian, “we now make sure everyone gets regular news from us.” However, as Sava says, “Despite the fresh approach with the period of the contract up, we had to go out to tender for which there was no shortage of interested parties. We had five vendors in the process initially and shortlisted this to two. ERIKS was the incumbent and performed well in the tender process, so they were part of the final two.”

Julia Mullar believes that the tender process was crucial in demonstrating to the two parties how much they had in common and how culturally aligned they were and that ERIKS were the supplier who best understood the

challenges that Weetabix were facing and were able to put in place a credible plan to help them which included re-shaping the profile of the stock, a new approach to critical spares management and a new focus on projects where ERIKS can introduce savings through technical solutions such as a pump efficiency audit or a motor efficiency assessment programme.

With the new contract in place a fresh view of the relationship was taken, “Through me” says Sava “ERIKS now has a voice to the senior leadership team or the engineering team and can get their message across to drive some of these new initiatives. It’s about working closer with the engineering teams, and in a way re-educating the engineering team that ERIKS is not just a stores operator but a resource with technical knowledge and supply chain insight that can make their lives easier.”



Quick response

A recent example of this was a 'Priority 1' request for an unusual pump that came in at the end of a day, past typical office closing hours. Unable to get through on the phone, the ERIKS team contacted the supplier via LinkedIn and got a quick response from the company's managing director! The item was delivered in time to get production up and running the next day. As Adrian says, "It's a good example of where we worked closely with the engineering community and met their needs, which in turn gives them the faith to engage more closely with us on other projects."

Another example, cited by both parties as being demonstrative of the new relationship is around the subject of critical safety spares specification. "There are parts and components that are critical from a safety point of view to protect our employees. Weetabix is a safety-first organisation and working with ERIKS we were able

to identify what parts were critical from a safety point of view and ensure that we had these on the shelves where we need them." says Sava.

"These parts are managed and physically treated differently" continues Adrian "they are in their own bespoke area, visually managed, with visual min/ max levels and they are a feature within the stores."

With the new agreement, some new Key Performance Indicators have also been introduced. The monthly spend with ERIKS is tracked (as well as the spend with other suppliers) which has thrown up an interesting point. Sava explains, "In the past, because the Weetabix engineers were prioritising getting a job done as quickly as possible (and not necessarily seeking the help of ERIKS) the monthly spend with outside suppliers was high. This trend has now been reversed."



Communication

Communication is a strong focus and not only are the key stakeholders attending the monthly KPI meeting but also, as Adrian outlines, “Actions are logged on a joint SharePoint between the two organisations and using this we can hold each other to account. This has evolved and we value it highly. We have embedded this dual aspect into the new agreement and it’s a fundamental difference to how we worked together in the past. Both parties want to be part of something successful and to look back in five years and know they were part of something fantastic.”

While being in the early stages of the new agreement some strategy and planning meetings are taking place and a re-launch event for OnSite is planned to let the Weetabix workforce know what they can now expect from their ERIKS team going forward.

There’s also a new level of proactivity on the ERIKS team’s side which the structure has not allowed for in the past. Alison Blakey, Customer operations Manager, who leads the ERIKS OnSite team is now able to attend the engineering team meetings, in order to understand their needs in greater detail. “It’s a complete change of dynamics”, says Sava, “Alison is now coming out of the stores and understanding the needs and the pain points of the engineering team and will, ultimately, be able to service them better.”

Sava sums up the new relationship and the changes that have been made. “The engagement part and the partnership is the big thing for me. ERIKS are integral in moving our business forward and are going on a journey with us. It’s a partnership. We are all responsible for hitting our objectives. We have a new dynamic and it’s all focused on the people because they are the most important thing.”

Contact

ERIKS Industrial Services Ltd.

UK & Ireland Head Office:
Seven Stars Road,
Oldbury,
West Midlands,
B69 4JR
T: 0121 508 6000

eriks.co.uk

ERIKS

Let's make industry work better