



Specialist wine importer, Continental Wine & Food has worked with Sanderson to expand the capability of its Swords implementation into a fully integrated, HMRC-approved bonded warehousing solution. The system runs the entire business and the company is harvesting the benefits in terms of cost savings and efficiency.

Sanderson provides full-bodied solution for wine importer

When Marino Bevilacqua arrived in the UK from Italy in the 1950s, he became something of a trailblazer. Unable to find the specialist wines he wanted, he established an operation to import continental wines for the growing restaurant and retail trade in this country. In 1960, he formed Continental Wine & Food (CWF) and today he remains the

chairman of this highly successful business which is now a manufacturer, importer and distributor of wines and speciality food items.

Headquartered in Huddersfield, the organisation has revenues of £43 million and employs 160 people. It has grown significantly in recent years and has two divisions - the largest supplies wine and other beverages to major retailers and

Sarah Makin *IT Manager*

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wholesalers, including Morrisons. The other part of the business distributes wine and food into restaurants, delicatessens and other small retail outlets. These are clearly two very different sets of customers, with diverse requirements and demands. Both are managed efficiently and successfully by CWF, which has built a strong reputation for flexibility, quality and outstanding service.

Swords from Sanderson is the leading business solution for delivered wholesale and cash & carry operations, and CWF originally implemented it to replace its existing, ageing system. As IT Manager Sarah Makin explains: “We ran our old system in conjunction with a bonded warehousing solution, called BondMaster. We had outgrown the CRM software and the supplier said it could no longer be supported. We looked at several options and saw that Swords fitted all our criteria.” It wasn’t only the software functionality that sealed the deal, as Makin recalls: “Sanderson was clearly committed to ongoing development of this system; even at the outset, we could see that Sanderson was the right company for us.”

Swords was implemented successfully and ran alongside BondMaster, an HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) approved system. Each organisation that runs a bonded warehouse (one in which goods are stored free of duty) must operate under strict conditions and to ensure compliance, they must use an HMRC-approved system to track and document incoming and outgoing goods. So

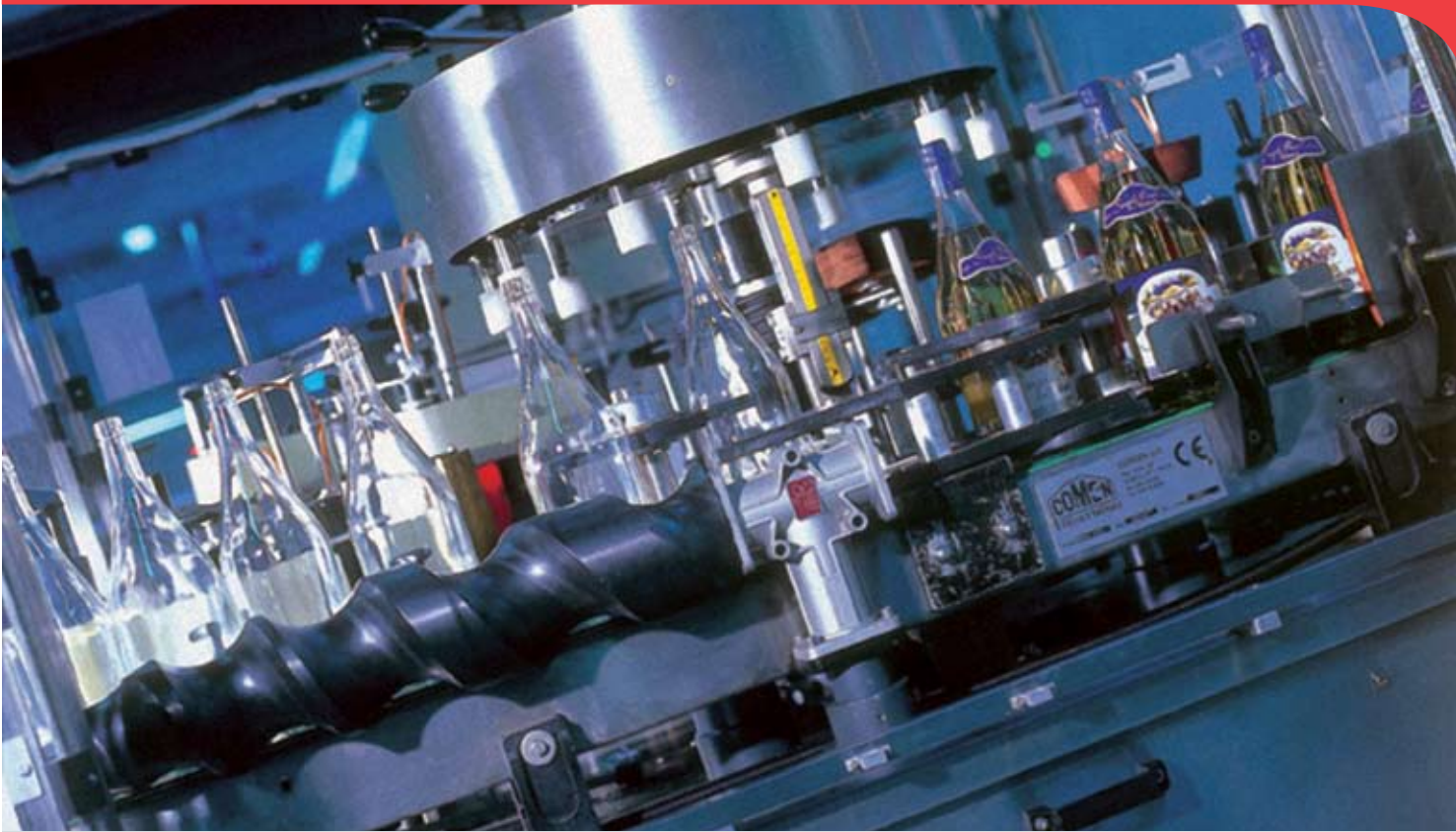
CWF began using the Sanderson system to run its overall business operation, but had to re-enter information into BondMaster to produce warrants and other HMRC-related paperwork and reports. That was until the supplier of BondMaster advised CWF that support was going to be withdrawn and they would have to upgrade to a new system.

This was just the prompt CWF needed. “It was going to be a costly exercise to upgrade BondMaster to its new equivalent. Plus, if we did that, we would still have our underlying problem of double entry, which was becoming more and more of an issue,” says Makin. “It was the ideal opportunity to move to one integrated solution, so we talked to Sanderson about developing Swords to incorporate the bonded warehouse functionality.”

This was, in fact, an idea that had been raised at the outset of the relationship, so they knew it was possible. The project began in earnest and Makin spent a couple of weeks in the bonded warehouse so she could get a real insight into the requirements of this operation. “When the development work began, I liaised constantly with the warehouse manager so that we could make sure the new solution really matched his needs.”

The new solution was an integral part of Swords, so throughout its development, it was operating in a live environment. CWF also had to keep BondMaster running in parallel because that system had the approval from HMRC.

“We had to keep both systems



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operating in tandem,” confirms Makin. “We couldn’t drop BondMaster until we had tested the new Swords solution fully and, importantly, gained HMRC approval for it.”

Developing a solution in a live system is not without its challenges, but CWF found the experience to be highly beneficial. “It was great to see the immediate results of each change as we developed the solution,” adds Makin. “What’s more, when it went live, everyone was already used to working with it so we had none of the pressure that usually comes with a new implementation.”

Throughout the development of the new solution, both CWF and Sanderson worked closely to meticulously plan each stage of the project. “We chose to have both systems running in parallel,” explains Makin. “We

wanted to leave both systems in place for as long as possible, to make sure we were 100% confident. We’d reached that stage after nine months and we spoke to HMRC who asked us to do one month’s final test so they could verify and approve the new solution.”

What happened next, however, was entirely unplanned. During this final test phase, the BondMaster server broke down irretrievably. HMRC officials had visited the site several months previously to verify technical development of Swords. CWF now had to ask them whether they would be prepared to bring forward approval before testing was completed. It’s a measure of the thorough planning of this project that HMRC gave immediate sanction to the Sanderson solution without a further

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site visit. “Obviously HMRC evaluation is extremely rigorous but they were very happy with the Sanderson software and gave approval that same day. We were pleasantly surprised, but it shows how confident they were in the system’s capability,” says Makin.

Within just a few weeks of operating the all-inclusive Sanderson solution throughout the business, CWF could see significant benefits. “There are cost benefits from having one solution, of course. If we had upgraded the BondMaster solution rather than develop Swords, we would have incurred a hefty upgrade charge, not to mention additional ongoing support costs.”

And CWF is also reaping rewards in terms of time and workload. Switching to the Sanderson solution has halved the work for the warehouse office staff. “Before, orders were taken and processed through Swords, but had to be entered manually into BondMaster. That introduced the risk of human error, which of course we couldn’t afford to have with a bonded warehouse system and was the key reason why we wanted a single integrated solution,” says Makin.

“Manual order entry into the bonded system took time, both for outgoing orders and for incoming deliveries. When goods arrived, we had to match that delivery

with purchase order information from Swords, enter the data into BondMaster and only then could we press the button to confirm receipt on the Swords solution. An enormous amount of work has been saved; we’ve saved the cost of one full-time salary just on rekeying data, because that person can now do more valuable work instead of churning data.”

Two systems meant two different sets of data – itself, a potential for problems. “That could be quite painful for us at times; Swords was running our business and was used by everyone; we were always entirely confident in the accuracy of its reports but Customs only accepted the BondMaster data, because that was the system with approval.”

One integrated system is clearly proving its worth. “Now, with the HMRC approval for Swords, we have one system and one set of numbers; the data flows seamlessly throughout each operation. We know the Sanderson solution will support us for many years to come. It has functionality that we have yet to use, and we also know that we can develop it further,” she adds.

“We’ve had a first-class service from Sanderson and we know this is a relationship that has many years to run.”