

Wright Brand Foods Doubles Bacon Production Capacity

Wright Brand Foods

Food Processing

Success Story

ProModel
Optimization Suite



CHALLENGES

Wright Brand foods, a family owned company in Vernon, Texas, has produced ham and bacon products for more than 77 years. They have experienced steady growth with both branded products and private label business. With over \$150 million in sales to retail customers such as WalMart stores and food service customers such as Denny's Restaurants. Their pork products ship to 30 states, Mexico, South America and Japan.

Making bacon is a complicated process, with considerable variability at each stage. It's a perishable product, so time is of the essence. Getting the finished product to distribution channels is critical and bacon production is closely monitored by USDA inspectors and the EPA. Cured and smoked pork products are in demand and there is competitive pressure to develop new bacon products. When Wright Brand Foods experienced a record 25% growth in sales, production could not keep up with demand. If Wright Brand Foods was going to be able to continue to grow, it would have to expand its production capacity.

Wright Brand Foods needed to expand its physical plant. The company's facilities were bounded on one side by railroad tracks and on another by an interstate highway, so an architectural engineering firm was brought in to develop a master expansion plan, including a design that would increase throughput by 20 percent. The plan was presented late, over budget and it was rejected. They didn't understand the bacon business, and only Phase One was actually implemented. Wright Brand Foods still needed to expand its human resources. The company had grown and hiring more people was necessary, however Vernon is a small remote town and recruiting is difficult, so the company would have to make the best possible use of its existing employees too. Management realized that any realistic plan would have to include losing a day of production.

OBJECTIVES

By using ProModel simulation, Wright Brand foods was able to confidently embark on a seven year plan for doubling production capacity. Simulation also helped the company meet EPA requirements. As more smokehouse capacity was added a new thermal oxidizer was needed to prevent air pollution. Without the model it would have been impossible to know how much additional thermal oxidation would be needed to meet stringent EPA standards.

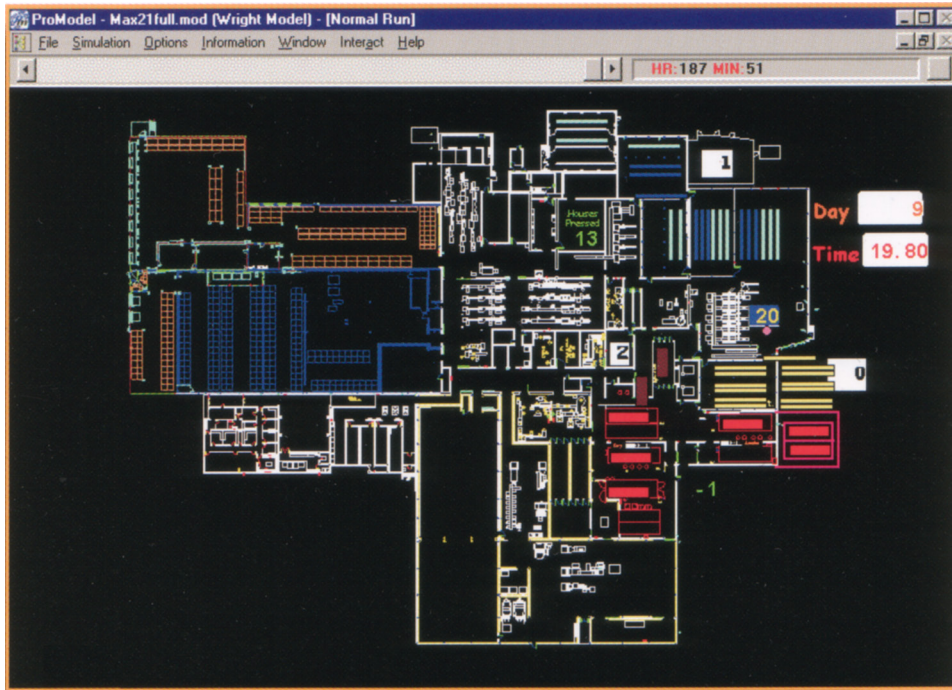
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SOLUTION

Only the bacon processes that had the most impact on timeliness and profitability were modeled. ProModel consultants worked with Wright Foods to model day to day operations of making bacon; preparing, curing, smoking, chilling, pressing, grading, slicing and packaging. In some cases, photographs of employees performing the processes were used to create process flowcharts. The visual representation helped make it clear to everyone that simply adding production space would not achieve the goal of doubling capacity. With the simulation information, Wright Foods was able to improve employee scheduling and equipment and facilities utilization enough to substantially increase throughput.



VALUE PROVIDED

Simulation yielded exceptional returns in improved planning and scheduling of their resources. The ability to predict and manage the impact of overtime, turnover, and absenteeism proved to be the biggest immediate benefit. The model was also used to explain and correct deficiencies for quality and productivity gains.

Now, Wright Brand Foods has the production capability to keep up with its sales. The company spent almost \$250,000 for a consultant's master plan which it could not use, but calculates that it has saved \$10 million by abandoning that plan and opting to base its growth plan on the ProModel simulation of their processes. Modeling the making of bacon has rendered such valuable results that Wright Foods is planning to extend simulation to its ham producing process, as well as to shipping warehousing, distribution and personnel.