



Britain's leading independent baker improves purchase order workflow with BlackBerry solution

Warburtons is the UK's leading independent baker. Run by the fifth generation of the Warburton family, it services customers from the Scottish islands and highlands to Southampton in the south of England. It produces over two million loaves, rolls and crumpets every day.

The Challenge

Six years ago Warburtons began using a BlackBerry® solution to provide mobile email to middle and senior management. Today there are over 160 users. "It's for anybody who needs to be reasonably mobile and contactable," says Bob Beard, Purchasing Director at Warburtons. The company chose a BlackBerry solution as it works very well with IBM® Lotus® Notes and was more professional and technically advanced than what they were using previously.

Compatibility with the company's Lotus Notes environment was the main reason for going with a BlackBerry solution. BlackBerry® Enterprise Server provides Warburtons with push-based wireless access to Lotus domino email, calendar, contacts and scheduling. "It gave us greater connectivity when out on the road. The executives found it very useful for keeping in contact and up to date," says Beard. In fact, it has become such an integral part of the company's operations that "anytime anybody loses or breaks their BlackBerry there's sheer panic at the thought of not being connected."

In 2007 Warburtons added a supplier relationship management (SRM) module to its SAP system, which changed the workflow for approving purchase orders. Managers now had to log on to SAP to release requisitions. When managers were out of the office, these tasks would pile up, as they had no mobile access to the SAP system. These delays would "clog the system" says Beard, exposing Warburtons to the risk of missing out on discounts and running short of supplies or spare parts. "We kept asking the question: is there an easier way?"

Benefits

Faster PO approval

Rapid user acceptance

Fast application development

Improved personal productivity



The Solution

Damien Ghee, IT Director at Warburtons, heard the pleas. In early 2009 he contacted Peter Stapells at iQlink, a member of the BlackBerry® Alliance Program, that specialises in integrating SAP and the BlackBerry® platform. iQlink recommended implementing an SAP purchase order (PO) approval application. Working in conjunction with Warburtons' IT team and its mobile carrier, iQlink rolled out the application in under a month.

When a PO is ready for approval, the application extracts the PO details from SAP and identifies the approver. An email alert is sent to the approver via BlackBerry Enterprise Server and the PO details are also pushed to the approver's BlackBerry® smartphone. Upon receiving an alert, the approver opens the application to review the PO and can release, reject or place it on hold. They can also review the details of the PO. If approved, the PO is returned to SAP for release. Whichever action is taken, the application sends an email to the originator to keep them informed of the status. If the BlackBerry smartphone is switched off, the approver's actions are stored on the smartphone and automatically synchronised with SAP when the network connection is re-established. If a change is made to a PO via the SAP desktop client, the update is pushed automatically to the BlackBerry smartphone.

The Benefits

"The deployment was remarkably quick and the application did exactly what we wanted," says Beard. "We enjoyed working with iQlink," adds Ben Tempest, Business Systems Manager at Warburtons. "They are very knowledgeable and approachable whenever we have required support." Beard credits the BlackBerry solution with generating "greater time efficiency," and he describes the BlackBerry smartphone as "quick and simple to use." As Purchasing Director, Beard estimates that he uses the BlackBerry solution with the PO application more than anyone else at Warburtons. "I travel a lot. I'm able to keep in touch and get POs done without lugging a laptop around. The beauty of it is that I know I've cleared my inbox and my POs."

Beard also attributes his higher personal productivity to the design and features of the smartphone. For example, he says, "you can file emails on a BlackBerry far faster than on a computer." As someone who works frequently with Excel and Word files, he describes the experience as "absolutely brilliant" on his BlackBerry® Bold™ 9700 series smartphone. He also uses BlackBerry® Maps for navigating when on foot and the BlackBerry® Browser for checking grain prices on Bloomberg and at the Minneapolis Grain Exchange.

Today, Warburtons processes purchase orders faster than before. "We've reduced approvals from nearly 48 hours to almost instantaneously," which has had a direct impact on company operations. "We have vendors who require a purchase order to be released to them very quickly, especially if we want immediate delivery or to take advantage of special pricing, and this is a great way of keeping the flow going."

Warburtons' positive experience with the BlackBerry solution and the PO application has set the stage for future expansion. "It's got us asking what else we can do with BlackBerry," says Beard. Currently, Warburtons is looking at bringing IBM® Lotus® Workflow™ software onto BlackBerry smartphones. "I remember the world without BlackBerry [smartphones], and I wouldn't want to go back," he concludes.

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"With the BlackBerry solution we've reduced approvals from nearly 48 hours to almost instantaneously."

Bob Beard
Purchasing Director
Warburtons

iQlink Ltd is a software sales, marketing and consulting company based in the UK in Bracknell, Berkshire. Formed in 2004, iQlink works closely with OEMs, their customers, channel resellers (VARs) and alliance partners, to deliver mobile and integration solutions that can realise a rapid return on investment for the customer.