

CASE STUDY: HUSSON UNIVERSITY

MOBILE-BASED INVENTORY AND STREAMLINED, INTEGRATED ORDERING

Background

Husson University is a private university based in Bangor, Maine. Founded in 1898, Husson was originally named the Shaw School of Business until 1953 when it was legally authorized to grant Bachelor of Science degrees and then in 2008, it became a university. Home of Maine's largest College of Business with majors including: Health Professions and Related Programs; Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services; Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services; Communications Technologies/Technicians and Support Services; and Psychology.



The Dining Services team first recognized the need for a food and beverage management system in 2018. According to Tom Fick, Project Engineer for Auxiliary Services, "We had zero periodic inventory and were lucky if we took inventory once a year. It was difficult to monitor and manage our operations and control costs without timely and reliable data." Ready to implement new standard operating procedures for F&B, the team began their search for a software solution that would best meet their needs.

The Goal

Husson clearly identified their requirements and knew they wanted an inventory system that offered a hosted solution, mobile data collection, catering and nutritional analysis features and a streamlined ordering approach with their vendors. Each requirement was given a weighted point value in order to accurately compare various systems to determine which one scored the highest across the board. With a recommendation from their Dining Operations Manager, who had used the FOOD-TRAK® Food & Beverage Management System at another job, and a simple Google Search, the team identified four software providers for consideration.

The Selection Process

The selection process began with RFPs that were sent out to each software provider with a request for product demonstrations. Husson had a collective group of eight team members from both Dining and Auxiliary Services that were taking notes and making comments along the way to narrow the field down to the top two based on the point value requirements. After identifying the top two providers, Husson requested a second round of demonstrations and customer references. According to Fick, "FOOD-TRAK's demonstrations had a huge advantage and edged out the competition." Scoring highest in the areas that mattered most, such as the ability to host the software and mobile data collection, were some of the contributing factors to FOOD-TRAK's win. Fick also states that "the menu navigation, ease of use and the ability to place orders directly from the main menu were significant factors as well." Husson University selected the FOOD-TRAK System and kicked off the project in 2019.

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*-Tom Fick
Project Manager for Auxiliary Services, Husson University*

The Plan

System Concepts, Inc. (SCI) is the developer of FOOD-TRAK and quickly got to work behind the scenes building the master database for Husson. With the database underway, the implementation began through a series of online virtual training classes to get the team at Husson prepared for the roll out. Once the database was finished and the virtual classes completed, SCI sent out their Implementation Director for onsite training with the Husson team to coincide with the launch. Bob Sedgwick, Director of Dining at Husson was very pleased with the implementation and noted that “the integration with our Performance Food Group (PFG) vendor was super smooth and easy to implement.” This was a true team effort as staff from their dining, accounting and procurement departments were all involved to ensure a successful launch of the software.

The Solution and Results

Husson began implementing new standard operating procedures for inventory and trained the staff on how to capture inventory electronically using the FOOD-TRAK Mobile Partner (FMP) scanners. Inventory is now taken on a monthly basis and is both efficient and accurate. Gone are the days of flying blind! Prior to FOOD-TRAK, “most inventory decisions were based on general knowledge and not on good historical data” claims Fick. Since implementing the system, Husson now has the proper resources to analyze reports and more accurately forecast ordering to avoid waste.

Integrated online ordering with vendors was high on the list of requirements and part of the selection process with FOOD-TRAK; therefore, the vendor interface to PFG was implemented immediately. According to Fick, new procedures for ordering “allow chefs to complete shopping lists generated by FOOD-TRAK that simplify and streamline the entire dining procurement process. Orders are now being delivered to our main dining hall and then transferred to the various outlets.” The FMP scanner has also been introduced here as well to speed up and improve the transfer process.

“Electronic procurement and running inventory are definitely the biggest bang for our buck. Now that procedures are in place for inventory, there has been a reduction in shrinkage and better utilization of remaining inventory as it is now returned to stock,” states Fick. Husson was also able to address student demand utilizing the FOOD-TRAK Nutritional Analysis Module to add USDA nutrition labels to their stocked food items and also have it available for their recipes.

Other departments that have benefitted from the implementation of FOOD-TRAK include the receiving department, where they’ve seen “huge time savings with the invoice reconciliation process and sending those up to accounting,” claims Fick.

The Future

Husson has plans to incorporate online vendor bidding in the very near future so they can get competitive pricing and move away from contracts. According to Fick, “Vendor pricing has been fluctuating wildly due to the pandemic. We need the ability to quickly compare pricing between vendors to ensure that we were getting the best possible price.” Savings are critical to all areas of the business, and the team at Husson is keeping a close watch to see where their biggest opportunities lie. Having great success with Point of Sale (POS), catering and vendor integration thus far, Husson is also looking to explore an interface to their AP software to automatically upload invoices, resulting in additional labor savings. When asked if he would recommend the FOOD-TRAK® Food & Beverage Management System to another organization, Fick enthusiastically replied, “Absolutely! Have them call me.”

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