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Ben & Jerry's: Quality From Cow to Cone

By **Alliston Ackerman & Alarice Padilla**

Super-premium ice cream makers **Ben & Jerry's** maintains the strictest standards of product quality. This attention to detail can be seen from "cow to cone" as the company says, meaning that each step of its supply chain — from suppliers and distributors to manufacturing operations — must comply with the company's three-part mission statement, which emphasizes product quality, economic reward and a commitment to community.



Focusing on its manufacturing operations, Ben & Jerry's maintains quality procedures for key performance indicators (KPIs) that ensure consistent product quality for every pint produced. To track quantitative data, the ice cream manufacturer previously used a paper-based system, which was proving to be cumbersome for operators and data administrators alike. Operators would take individual readings and calculate an average of those readings to plot on a paper chart. Quality assurance personnel would then perform manual calculations to compute trends and create reports. This system was not only slow and inflexible, but also costly in terms of man hours required. Ben & Jerry's needed a fast and reliable way to collect and analyze the vital quality data of its products.

"What sets Ben & Jerry's apart from our competitors is not only our insistence on high-quality ingredients, but also the extra and unique flavors we use to create a euphoric customer experience. Ensuring the final product reflects the passion and quality that we put into each pint required a quality solution that emphasized the same attention to details that we do," says Melissa Corcia, quality manager, Ben & Jerry's.

Ben & Jerry's deployed InfinityQS' ProFicient enterprise quality hub to streamline its quality control procedures. Powered by a statistical process control (SPC) analysis engine, the system easily automates data collection and integration from terminals on the shop floor, while its real-time monitoring and analysis functions enable the quality department to acquire manufacturing intelligence by tracking variability across each production line.

Because each line has a different run capability, Ben & Jerry's created run charts within ProFicient based on Six Sigma data collected on the plant floor to determine variations specific to each individual line. By measuring, monitoring and controlling four main product attributes — weight, volume, air addition and inclusion amounts — as the pints come off the production lines, quality teams can work with production to quickly make adjustments in real time as products or processes approach specification limits.

Quality teams can also compare the data acquired through visual cut-ups — a process where a pint is cut into quadrants to ensure the proper amount of inclusions appear in each serving — to the run capability data in ProFicient to identify the source of any variability in inclusion or variegate distribution and volume as identified during the cut-up.

Since implementation, Ben & Jerry's has used manufacturing intelligence to identify instances to improve run capability and raw material usage. Furthermore, using advanced reporting, the ice cream manufacturer is saving a significant amount of time by eliminating manual calculations and time-consuming report creation. Reports now run in seconds as opposed to the eight to 10 hours previously. Operators dramatically reduced paper usage and are able to better focus on improving production processes and efficiency.

Nina King, quality supervisor, Ben & Jerry's, says, "By utilizing **InfinityQS'** ProFicient to implement SPC and Six Sigma best practices across our manufacturing processes, Ben & Jerry's will continue to identify opportunities for cost savings and ensure the highest level of customer

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satisfaction. The result is the perfect pint for our customers.”

FAST FACTS

A Sticky Situation

Ensuring consistent, high-quality products as Ben & Jerry's grew became costly in terms of man hours. Paper-based quality programs were cumbersome, time-consuming and prone to errors, while manual programs did not offer tools to identify real-time opportunities for improvement.

The Sweet Taste of Success

Because high-quality ingredients are typically also high priced (up to \$800 for a single barrel of swirl), the ability to fine tune quality control procedures results in less raw material variation, cost savings and a higher quality Ben & Jerry's product for the consumer.

Company at a Glance

Offering beloved flavors such as Phish Food, Cherry Garcia, Chunky Monkey and more, Ben & Jerry's, a wholly owned subsidiary of Unilever, distributes products globally in supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants and nearly 700 Scoop Shops worldwide.

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