



Case study

Buy Wholefoods Online

Buy Wholefoods Online have transformed and scaled their warehouse management operations using Linnworks for automation.



Find out how Linnworks can grow your business. Request a demo at www.linnworks.com/demo

A shared love for wholefoods led cousins Arthur Martin and Joe Cooper to start an ecommerce business in 2007.

Fifteen years later, they are the biggest seller of wholefoods in the UK. Buy Wholefoods Online delivers top quality natural and organic wholefoods, and related healthy living products, directly to homes and businesses across the UK.

Arthur saw the opportunity to take this kind of business online after working in a local wholefoods shop. Arthur and Joe started with a bare minimum of resources (and a massive amount of passion), working from a modest back-garden shed rented from Joe's parents, which they proceeded to transform into a mini-warehouse. From these humble beginnings, they never looked back. The company grew incredibly quickly from year to year, developing into the ever-successful wholefoods company it is today with over 6,000 products.

The challenge: Inefficient warehouse management and time-consuming processes.

But this didn't come without its challenges. What makes Buy Wholefoods Online unique is how broad they are as a business, they offer the most diverse range of products and serve as a one stop shop for wholefoods. Arthur, Managing Director and Co-Founder emphasizes, "As you become broader and add more products to your business it adds complexities to the warehouse process. As the business grew, these magnified even further and confirmed we needed an inventory and order management platform to cope with it."



That's where Linnworks came into the picture in 2012. Ten years ago, there weren't many options in the market. Linnworks was recommended to Buy Wholefoods Online. The recommendation gave them the reassurance they could overcome their challenges. Prior to Linnworks, all processes were manual and time consuming, with Arthur and his team having to type out a label for every order, then input the labels into a Royal Mail interface web portal to get them printed out.

The solution: Automated warehouse management operations.

Buy Wholefoods Online were using the core Linnworks platform, but as the business expanded and became more complex with growing product ranges, Arthur and his team quickly realized that they needed a solution to manage warehouse operations.

Traditional picklists were proving to be problematic because of how manual they were and the lack of control associated with it. With paper picklists, you are simply checking off orders with a pen after an item has been picked.

Arthur explains “When you have 10 people doing the same thing this sometimes means you don’t have enough inventory to satisfy all orders and you don’t know if somebody’s already taken the item off the warehouse shelf from another picklist or whether the stock levels are wrong.”

When there are multiple staff interacting with stock shelves, it can cause a big operational headache, which can affect other business processes and ultimately the customer experience if anything was to go wrong.

It was an easy decision for Arthur and the team to start using Linnworks warehouse features in 2019 and ultimately go digital. “Pickwaves were a breath of fresh air in the way that it allocates stock and allowed us to gain greater control and efficiency over our warehouse operations,” says Arthur.

Pickwaves, a core piece of Linnworks functionality, is a digital picklist that shows what needs to be picked to fulfill orders and is sent directly to a user’s mobile scanner. It provides all the relevant information to understand exactly what needs to be picked, where from and who by. This helps reduce human error and allows businesses to track metrics on picker performance.



Not only does the pickwaves feature eliminate the need for printing mountains of paper, but it also provides optimal routes through the warehouse, making operations more efficient. Pickwaves offers peace of mind that stock levels in the Linnworks platform are accurate to what’s on the shelf and businesses have full visibility from the time the product hits the shelf to the time it’s shipped off to their customers.

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Arthur states, Now the jobs that we’d employ someone to do for a whole day are automated with Linnworks, saving us time and overheads.

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The results: A growing business making data-driven decisions.

What has been instrumental in Buy Wholefoods Online’s growth and business success is the access to data within Linnworks.

Arthur states, “Information is power and enables you to make crucial, data-driven business decisions. The way you can access information from Linnworks is great and has had a massive impact on the business. From the point of view of seeing what stock figures you have and where you are from a monthly account point of view, if you’re doing a monthly count you have to have a solution like Linnworks. Retrieving this information would be a major struggle without Linnworks.”

Another big impact Linnworks has had on the business is reducing wage costs. “Linnworks has reduced manual tasks and saved on wages. Without Linnworks we’d have to employ more staff, which has an impact on our overall bottom line.

Linnworks has also helped Buy Wholefoods Online when it comes to growth and handling a bigger capacity because it's scalable. Arthur mentions, "If we get twice as busy [during], for example, peak periods, I know Linnworks can handle it. I'm confident that it just works and is reliable."



When it's time to upgrade.

Arthur Martin has over 25 years of experience in the wholefoods industry. He is always on site as the warehouse manager, dealing with everything from produce supply and selection, to quality control, staff coordination and all warehouse operations. So he knows what to look out for when investing in a warehouse management solution.

Arthur says, "Once you get to a certain business size, a warehouse management module is absolutely essential. If you want to keep a lot of stock in one place then core inventory and order management functionality is great. But once you have a more complex stock movement type of business, warehouse management is absolutely necessary. You have to factor in stock replenishment, stock coming in, stock going to quality checks and a complicated inventory set up."

Linnworks warehouse management allows you to move stock around your warehouse locations more efficiently and seamlessly. It layers advanced control and visibility on top of core Linnworks functionality to make managing warehouse operations more efficient.

When comparing warehouse management solutions and services, Arthur recommends sticking to what you know. "Be careful of companies with hidden costs associated with running their systems. Sometimes this means employing extra people for things such as managing SQL databases which defeats the purpose of outsourcing a system in the first place. Buying a license appears like a great deal initially but what happens is you get tied into expensive service contracts and then you need to maintain the software on your server, that requires someone with a different set of skills that as a business you probably wouldn't want to have." Buy Wholefoods Online understands that they're an ecommerce business and not a programming company. Having a platform like Linnworks allows them to focus on what they do best.



Arthur summarizes, Linnworks warehouse management has been fantastic and I haven't looked back since. It's been a real upgrade.



Looking ahead.

During the 10 years working and partnering with Linnworks, Buy Wholefoods Online has seen the evolution of the Customer Success, Support and Product teams. “We’ve been empowered to put ideas across and influence product improvements and see how things have changed so we’re excited to see what else is to come in the future,” Arthur says.

Buy Wholefoods Online is also looking at further growth by expanding into new locations and other countries. The option of having two separate locations in Linnworks is a great way of reducing shipping costs. For example, it’s much cheaper to send a parcel to Romania from Romania than it is to send it from the Netherlands or Ireland.

Arthur is confident about Linnworks functionality to manage multiple locations and appreciates how easy and simple it is to scale with Linnworks. “Linnworks is very scalable from a location point of view and I think that’s a major asset to them.”



Find out more about how you can streamline warehouse operations with Linnworks here.

www.linnworks.com/warehouse-management-solution



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