

Spar Retailers Get Connected with Connections and Sage 200



Corrib Oil SPAR Express has gained exceptional increases in efficiency and productivity with a comprehensive front- and back-office integrated retail solution. Here, we discover how the Advent Connections suite of software solutions and Sage

200 work to reinforce Corrib Oil's commitment to service excellence.

About Corrib Oil SPAR Express

Corrib Oil SPAR Express prides itself on the same commitment to Olympic Gold Standard customer service that has contributed to the success of its parent company, Corrib Oil. This retail division has demonstrated strong and continuing growth since 1991, with the purchase of its first petrol station. In 1996, the Corrib Oil SPAR Express retail division was formally established, resulting in continuing expansion and growth.

Corrib Oil SPAR Express now operates fifteen separate SPAR Express retail service stations located throughout the Midlands and the West of Ireland. These outlets provide a wide variety of products and services to their many customers including a complete range of grocery products, petrol, and home heating oil. BWG, one of Ireland's leading wholesalers, provides the majority of products for resale at Corrib Oil's SPAR Express retail outlets.

Now employing over four hundred people within the retail division, Corrib Oil SPAR Express's workforce is motivated by a variety of core values. The division's Financial Controller Richard Carroll explains. 'One of our primary business values states that we're a workforce that is driven by the desire to better our company – and ourselves – by constantly challenging each other to never accept "Good Enough",' Richard states.

'Our mission is therefore driven by a constant search for innovation to improve our levels of service to our customers, as well as to our suppliers and stakeholders. Our willingness to explore new methodologies works to nurture a search for continuing growth, and increased internal productivity and efficiencies.'



Corrib Oil's Richard Carroll (left) and Advent's Ray Ryan (right) getting connected with Advent's Connections Suite and Sage 200

The Challenge: Increasing Productivity for Retail Operations

In the division's continuing search for methods to increase productivity and customer service levels, Richard and his team began to examine technologies that would integrate retail and back-office accounting software, and the critical operating data that they contained.

'We desired a solution that would help us to integrate all transactions at the tills in our 15 SPAR Express outlets with a centralised back-office solution in order to automate all, or at least most, of the posting tasks at head office,' Richard explains.

'Simultaneously, we wanted to address a far greater challenge. Our main supplier, BWG, delivers to each of our 15 SPAR Express outlets, and will issue our division with up to 120 invoices per retail site per week. That works out to as many as 1,800 invoices in that period or close to 100,000 invoices annually.

'Historically, we employed a small team full-time to manage those invoices. The invoice pack received from BWG would have to be pulled apart, manually matched against the appropriate delivery docket, and checked for accuracy. This was a time consuming process, and due to its manual nature, was somewhat prone to inaccuracy. Due to the high volume of stock purchases and subsequent invoices, it was very difficult to ensure the complete accuracy of every invoice and every price.

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'What we desired, therefore, was a system that would automate this manual process. We also wanted an integrated solution that would provide management with comprehensive division accounting and management information, and that would allow us to consolidate all appropriate data from the fifteen stores in order to provide complete division profit and loss information. Such a solution would enable the Corrib Oil SPAR Express division to be examined as a completely separate profit centre. By doing so, we would not only increase our internal productivity and efficiency, but also our ability to manage the division's growth.'

Corrib Oil SPAR Express's search for an integrated software solution was somewhat complicated by the fact that the division was already using an electronic point of sale (EPoS) software system in its stores. 'We had already invested significantly in our EPoS systems, and were very satisfied with it,' Richard states. 'Therefore, we desired a new solution that would somehow link our existing EPoS systems with a new accounting and management back-office software system.'

'We looked at a variety of possible methods. Finally, we were introduced to Ray Ryan at Advent Processing Solutions. He recommended a solution that we believed would achieve our objectives.'

The Solution: Integrated Advent Connections and Sage 200

Dublin-based Advent Processing Solutions, an award winning Sage Business Partner, prides itself on the development of integrated IT and accounting solutions for large, mid-sized, and smaller Irish companies. Advent has been working closely with BWG on the development of a powerful suite of software that integrates existing EPoS software with Sage accounting back-office solutions. This software facilitates the invoicing and accounting processes throughout the range of franchise retail store operations.

The result of that development was Advent's suite of Connections software, as Advent's Managing Director Ray Ryan explains. 'Our Connections software suite is composed of three modules,' he states.

'FranchiseConnect electronically imports BWG's weekly invoice Print Pack in digital form, and automatically posts them to Sage back-office accounting software and appropriate nominal accounts, thereby dramatically reducing the amount of manual data entry.'



'FranchiseConnect Plus goes one step further by automatically comparing and matching supplier invoices to purchase orders. Any discrepancies in agreed prices or quantities are highlighted by the software and can be queried with the supplier.'

'RetailConnect provides the automated business management link that integrates EPoS software systems on the tills with Sage accounting and management software solutions. This integration facilitates the automatic transfer of data from (and to) tills to the accounting back-office solution.'

When Ray discussed Corrib Oil SPAR Express's requirements with Richard, he recommended the installation of an integrated solution incorporating Sage 200, Sage's robust mid-range accounting and management solution, along with Advent's FranchiseConnect Plus and RetailConnect.



Getting Connected:
Corrib Oil's SPAR Express store in Tuam, Co. Galway

The Powerful Benefits of Integration

'The results have been astonishing,' says Richard.

'Increases in efficiency and productivity, as well as accuracy, that have accrued to the division from the new solution have been exceptional,' he adds. 'Integration has been key to the new solution's success.'

Advent worked closely with Richard and his team to specify and install the various elements of the new solution. Sage 200 now sits at the heart of the division's back-office, providing comprehensive accounting and management capabilities. 'All accounting data is now streamed from the fifteen separate retail location tills to Sage 200,' Richard explains. 'This provides us with comprehensive P&L division data, while also providing comprehensive banking capabilities. All payments received at local tills are now streamed to Sage 200 for automatic analysis. Cash, credit, and debit card payments are automatically compared with, and reconciled to, bank statements. This single benefit has resulted in significant increases in efficiency and accuracy.'

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Sage 200 also provides a wide range of robust capabilities including nominal accounts, bank, debtors, creditors, VAT analysis, online ROS capabilities, and comprehensive management reporting.

Advent's Connections software suite drives the integrated solution, as Richard explains. 'Now, the BWG invoice pack is received by us digitally. This is automatically disaggregated by individual shop, and held in Sage 200. Delivery notes that have been keyed into Handheld Scanners at store level are streamed to Sage 200 over the *FranchiseConnect Plus* solution that has been linked to our EPoS till software. The Connections software then automatically compares individual BWG invoices with relevant delivery note information.

'Exceptions are automatically noted by *FranchiseConnect Plus*. An auto-query is generated, and despatched back to BWG, noting items for subsequent reconciliation. This automatic capability has resulted in significant increases in efficiency, productivity, and accuracy, thereby dramatically reducing administration costs.

'Sales and stock are also driven by the integrated solution. Individual product stock levels for each store are held on the till software. When re-orders are required, the integrated solution gathers that data, which then emails BWG with the order. This centralised ordering capability is not only more accurate, but also allows our division to order economically, while also reducing stock out scenarios.

'Finally, the integrated solution also provides management, both in head office and at individual store level, with exceptional sales information. Tills are automatically polled by the Sage 200 solution, and data transferred via the Connections management link for further analysis. That data can provide us with critical management information: what lines are moving quickest and have the best margins? What lines aren't moving? What stores are performing best and why? The richness of the data provided by the solution results in reports that are critical to us.'

Achieving Measurable Business Benefits

'We were very excited when Corrib Oil SPAR Express presented us with this challenge,' explains Ray. 'As with all projects, we were keen to demonstrate that their investment in software would not only dramatically improve on their internal administration procedures but would also achieve measurable business benefits on the bottom line.'

'From working with the BWG Technology Team we were also anxious to ensure we met their ambition of ensuring that "off-the-shelf" software solutions are available for any Spar Franchise Operator to achieve the same results regardless of size. To deliver on this, the Advent Connections Suite integrates with both the Sage 50 and Sage 200 accounting software packages along with integration to the main EPoS solutions operating in the Spar Stores network.'

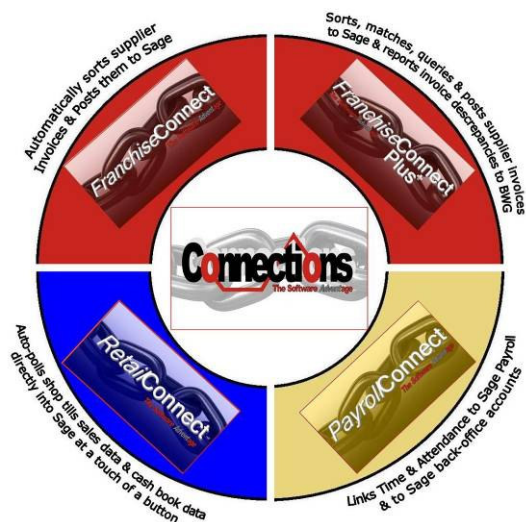
Performed Exactly as Promised

'I would recommend the Advent Connections software suite, the Advent team and Sage 200 without hesitation,' Richard states.

'Advent were professional, met the deadlines and budgets that they promised, and provided exceptional support. In turn, the Advent Connections software suite performed exactly as promised: it provided integration capabilities between our EPoS till software and the centralised accounting software, while also empowering us to accurately match thousands of invoices with appropriate delivery information.

'Sage 200 has also performed exactly as promised. Its robust functionality provides the division with required P&L, accounting, and management reporting information.

'Our company has always prided itself on our desire to better our company in order to better serve our customers. With this integrated Sage and Advent solution, we have done just that.'



For More Information

Corrib Oil

For more information on Corrib Oil, Corrib Oil SPAR Express, and the company's commitment to excellence in customer service, contact them. T: 091 75131 W: www.corriboil.com

Advent

For more information on *FranchiseConnect*, *FranchiseConnect Plus*, *RetailConnect*, and Advent's wide range of professional IT and software solutions, contact them. T: 01 8223 200 E: sales@advent.ie W: www.advent.ie