



Alligator River Growers

www.alligatorrivergrowers.com



At A Glance:

- **Company:** Alligator River Growers
- **Location:** Engelhard, NC
- **Industry:** Agriculture
- **Challenges:**
 - To replace the siloed back-end and ecommerce applications with one integrated suite
- **Software switched from:**
 - ACCPAC; stand alone applications for accounts payables, payroll and order management
- **Results with NetSuite:**
 - Saving \$1,200 a month in general IT maintenance and support and upgrades of the latest versions of the previous software or the latest tax tables

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Alligator River Growers*

The Results: IT Savings

The owners of Alligator River Growers, husband and wife Wilson and Debbie Daughtry, estimate that by deploying NetSuite they save at least \$1,200 every month in IT costs, between general maintenance, software upgrades and tech consulting when necessary.

“By running three different software packages, you can only imagine the cost of annual maintenance and support fees we were paying,” Debbie says. “Prior to switching to NetSuite, it was costing us over \$1200 just to maintain the software with the latest versions or the latest tax tables in the case of payroll. That did not include the cost of tech support in the event you needed it.”

And when such events occurred—as they inevitably do—they would prove to be even more costly than the daily expenses of system maintenance. On two separate occasions, for instance, the company lost almost an entire year of general ledger data when the system crashed, requiring weeks of reentry time and consulting to recreate the records. As Debbie puts it, “have you ever found any computer or software-literate person to work for you for less than \$100 per hour?”

“Now our data integrity issue is solved—we don’t have to wonder if our data is backed up or when it was last backed up. We trust someone else is doing that chore.”

The Challenge: 3 Phones, 2 Clipboards

With some 3,800 acres of grain crops and about 1,400 acres of produce crops, including the famous “Sweet Mattamuskeet” onion, Debbie and Wilson did not have the time to worry about the disparate applications running its business and retail operations. But as the company grew, the couple began to worry that their system - essentially a patchwork of the ACCPAC general ledger, and separate accounts payables and payroll applications—would not be able to scale quickly enough, or was integrated enough to handle complex orders.

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Alligator River Growers was founded in 2001 with three telephone lines and 2 clipboards to hold the order sheets, Wilson likes to relate. It was the typical American family farming enterprise—that is, until the state Farm Bureau stepped in. “It ran a story about us in the Farm Bureau magazine with a picture of our four-year-old daughter holding a handful of onions,” he says. “Two weeks after the magazine hit the mail, we had taken about 1,000 orders for onions to be shipped.”

The order management process in place was a nightmare, Wilson remembers. “We knew there had to be a better way.” So the company purchased a stand-alone order entry program—which did help with the immediate issues—but did not include such key features as a seamless link to UPS Shipping or have an ecommerce component to integrate to the company’s Web store.

The Solution: Small Farm Economics

The Daughtrys liked the ability of being able to custom design the financial reports that its old system provided. “We, and our lenders, felt it necessary to be able to generate a budget according to an actual comparative income statement on a monthly basis,” Wilson says.

But the costs of maintaining the systems were adding up. Also, the glitches that resulted from maintaining siloed applications and data were beginning to cause problems.

NetSuite, the Daughtrys say, proved to be the answer. “The beauty of this package,” Wilson says, “is being able to access all the functions via the Internet. You literally have access to your financial information and can perform daily, weekly, or monthly tasks from any location where you have an Internet connection.”

Debbie was won over by the suite’s simplicity. “It eliminated the need for multiple software programs,” she says. “We don’t have to worry with annual maintenance fees or software tech support costs. We were able to solve our order entry problems, have a Web site, and a Web store all rolled in one package.”

The integrated order management functionality, according to the couple, has been particularly helpful to the company as it continues to grow.

“As orders come in over the phone and Web store, they are entered into the NetSuite system,” Debbie says. “We choose a certain number to fill per day, the invoices are printed, the credit cards are processed, the shipping/packing lists are generated, and the order is fulfilled.”

Also, she adds, NetSuite’s payroll and accounts payable functions and reports are more than adequate for what the business requires. “We now are able to see our receivables as they are generated daily from our Web and retail sales. NetSuite has given our small farm business the ability to manage itself as many of the much larger companies do routinely, at a price we can afford to pay.”

None of this would have been possible, assert the Daughtrys, without the help of Lohmueller Consulting, Inc. of Raleigh, NC. The Lohmueller team assisted Alligator River

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Growers throughout the entire process of securing and implementing NetSuite.

Rufus Lohmueller, President of Lohmueller Consulting, put it this way: "One of the most rewarding benefits of helping Alligator River Growers implement NetSuite has been seeing the success and direct benefit they have gained from using technology that has never before been available for the small to mid-sized business market."

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