



Client Success Story

Going National: E.A. Sween Increases Productivity & Expansion with Brightly's Asset Essentials

Client

E.A. Sween Company

Location

Eden Prairie, Minnesota, United States

Vitals

Producer and distributor of sandwiches and other ready-to-eat foods with:

- Three manufacturing facilities
- 39 maintenance staff members
- Annual production of more than 100 million sandwiches

Background

E.A. Sween has been family owned since its founding in 1955. Tom H. Sween, third-generation CEO, wanted to expand the business from a local manufacturer to a national company, but traditional, manual practices made that goal challenging.

Results

Using Brightly's Asset Essentials, E.A. Sween has been able to:

- Track and manage inventory of more than 7,000 parts
- Boost preventive maintenance completion rate by more than 250%
- Expand seamlessly with an easy-to-implement system

Tracking and Managing Parts

When E.A. Sween implementing Asset Essentials, Williams was working as the parts manager, responsible for maintaining 7,000 parts in the plant. He focused on moving away from paper processes and moving parts management into the software.

Over time, all 7,000 inventory parts were documented in Asset Essentials, with minimum and maximum criteria. That allowed managers to add parts to work orders and easily see those on the minimum list to reorder. Because Asset Essentials allows custom fields, Williams added pictures and parts diagrams to individual assets in the system to make it easier for technicians to find and use the parts they need.

“Our goal is for our techs to be able to go to a computer, look up the part they need, and be able to find it in less than two minutes,” he says. “Asset Essentials has created the visibility and customization to fit what we do and the parts we have.”

Improving Preventive Maintenance

In 2022, when Williams was promoted to maintenance planner, he began using Asset Essentials to manage and track preventive maintenance. “I could not schedule the hundreds of pieces of equipment we have to maintain every week without Asset Essentials,” he says. “I can set short windows, automatically assign work, update and quickly reassign when something changes, and the software automatically creates follow-up work orders to keep things moving and all our equipment maintained.”

When the company ramped up production from five days to seven days a week to accommodate demand for their products, Williams began to see preventive maintenance completion rates steadily declining to about 25%. By studying the analytics available in Asset Essentials, he determined that small preventive maintenance jobs had been keeping the percentage high, while many of the large preventive maintenance tasks were left undone.

“We had these million dollar pieces of equipment that weren’t getting any preventive maintenance or downtime,” Williams says. Evaluating each preventive maintenance task, he used Asset Essentials to estimate the time needed for each one and create a model of the number of hours needed to complete all necessary tasks. The data showed that technicians were needed for 120 hours of preventive maintenance during a two-week period, in which they were only at work for 80 hours.

“The software showed us that our technicians were just inundated,” Williams says. “We were able to use that data to show we needed additional preventive maintenance staff, and it gave us the leverage to get those people.”

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We were using a very difficult, paper-driven work order process. Our purchase orders were paper, and technicians used a sign-out sheet in our parts room to order the parts they needed. It was very difficult to track and trace everything.

Erik Williams

Maintenance Planner, E.A. Sween

Replicating Success

After harnessing Asset Essentials to improve processes at its main plant, E.A. Sween can now seamlessly replicate that success in new facilities. When E.A. Sween opened its second plant in 2019, Williams had to be “extremely hands on,” helping to track items and build efficiencies. But five years later, when the company opened its third plant, the process was different.

“With Asset Essentials, onboarding the new plant has been much easier,” Williams says. “It’s just training and touching base. They don’t need a heavy hand involved because of the system that is in place and the capabilities of Asset Essentials.”

For example, when E.A. Sween operated only one plant, the company could rely on a longtime technician who “knew where every screw was and how tight to tighten it,” Williams says. But as the company expands and the workforce is updated, Asset Essentials serves as a single source of truth that all technicians at each facility can reference to find the repeatable steps they need to take for various maintenance tasks.

“Asset Essentials’ flexibility allows us to streamline our process and our communication, and makes it easy to share knowledge and information with people who need it,” Williams says.

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