

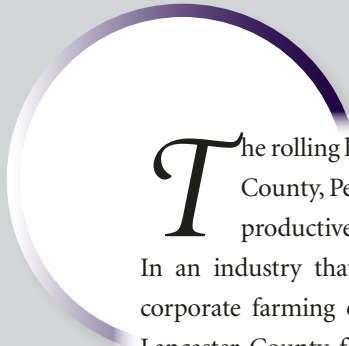


NEXTSTEP – Bringing Technology To Agriculture

A MAS 90® Distribution and Manufacturing Solution

“When we need assistance, it’s typically of a very high level, NextStep’s level of expertise can’t be found elsewhere, at any price.”

Client Profile



The rolling hills and fertile valleys of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania hold some of the most productive farmland anywhere in America. In an industry that has seen a move toward large corporate farming operations, there is still room in Lancaster County for the small, independent farms. Stevens Feed Mill has been meeting the needs of these traditionally-run farms for decades. The primarily Amish and Mennonite farmers depend on the quality corn and soy animal feed offered by Stevens Feed Mill. As a family-run business, Stevens Feed Mill is proud that many of today’s customers are the grandchildren of the farmers that purchased feed from the Mill back at its inception nearly fifty years ago.

Complex Requirements

Like their customers, Stevens Feed Mill is not hasty about making changes to systems that work. They embrace the technology that makes their business more effective and efficient, but do not believe in adding complexity just to follow a trend. So it was after careful consideration that MAS 90 was purchased from NextStep a decade ago, leaving behind a customized DOS-based system that had become increasingly difficult to support. Stevens later upgraded to the Windows version of MAS 90, and has since taken advantage of many of the productivity tools available to MAS 90 users.



MAS 90 Sales Order and Sales Kits has transformed how business is done; from hand-written orders to electronic orders that maintain perpetual inventory

Stevens’ operation is surprisingly complex. In addition to mixing and selling over 200 varieties of feed, they hold contracts with farmers to raise livestock. These contracts are treated as individual profit centers and require that the farmer be treated as both a customer and a vendor.

General Ledger Excels

NextStep’s careful initial design of accounting and operational procedures, plus a strategic layout of the chart of accounts, makes accounting for Stevens Feed Mill’s complex transactions possible. Each livestock contract is represented by a separate division, and the main feed mill operation is its own division. In this way, costs and operating expenses can be accurately posted to the appropriate division, as can revenues and assets. Placing a value on growing livestock is a bit of a moving target; a worth is assigned to each animal at the end of each month, and a journal entry is made to the appropriate inventory account.

Keeping this elaborate level of detail is easy within MAS 90, and is invaluable for assessing the profitability of each operation. Several specialized reports, created by NextStep in General Ledger’s Custom Financials and Crystal Reports, offer a clear picture of the monthly and yearly financial health of each division individually, and of the company as a whole.

“We must be able to track profit and loss by individual division,” emphasizes Delvin Martin, Stevens’

Office Manager, "Prior to using MAS 90, we didn't have a truly accurate profitability picture until our CPA visited, every six months."

Manufacturing And Distribution

Bill of Materials Kits hold the recipes for each of the feed products. During Sales Order Entry, kit items are entered and exploded, resulting in a full listing of the component items on the order. Picking sheets showing the kit item and its components are given to the mill workers who pick the components and custom mix the ingredients for each order. "Believe it or not, before MAS 90, we used to write each picking ticket by hand from the Master Formula," recalls Martin. The Sales Order Open Order by Item Report is a useful tool, enabling Stevens to project the usage of various ingredients, thereby consolidating production runs for time and labor savings.

The driver weighs the feed and loads it into one of the company's delivery trucks. Customers are charged by the actual weight of the feed delivered—the finished weight may vary slightly from the ordered weight. The actual quantity shipped is easily adjusted during Invoice Data Entry, and the price is recalculated if necessary. As the invoice is posted, inventory is relieved of the appropriate quantities of each of the ingredients. The customers' copy of the invoice appropriately shows only the kit item, not the individual ingredients.

While most feed orders are custom mixed, some products are prepackaged. These items are handled using Bill of Materials Production Entry, where after the production run, the component items are relieved from inventory, and the finished product is placed into stock, ready for sale.

The cost of the commodities, such as corn and soy, fluctuate widely and are revised weekly according to market conditions. After costs are changed, the Bill of Materials Cost Roll-Up Register is printed to calculate and update the new cost of the kit items, based



MAS 90's Bill of Materials helps Stevens formulate over 200 different varieties of products

on the costs of their components.

Current customer price lists are then prepared, as pricing is based on a markup of the items' cost. Inventory price codes, in combination with customer price levels, enable Stevens to customize pricing for each customer, and offer discounts based on the quantity purchased.

The MAS 90 Purchase Order module is used to place orders for commodities used in the manufacturing process. Experienced buyers within the company negotiate for 100 bushels of grain at a time to obtain the best possible price; partial shipments of this larger contract are received periodically.

Exceptional Support Services

Quarterly newsletters provided by NextStep keep Stevens' staff informed about new version releases and tips for maximizing the use of MAS 90. Martin appreciates the thoroughness of the training they receive from NextStep, and finds NextStep's skill and mastery of MAS 90 apparent in everything they do. "They have trained us well, giving us the information we need to succeed. There are other support organizations around, and some with lower fees, but NextStep's excellent service has kept us loyal."

When a lightning strike zapped the Stevens Feed Mill server, NextStep was there to coordinate the data recovery efforts and bring the new server on line. "We like to be self-sufficient and can troubleshoot most of our own problems. When we need assistance, it's typically of a very high level," explains Martin, "NextStep's level of expertise can't be found elsewhere, at any price."

Stevens Feed Mill and NextStep—succeeding in their markets by offering high quality products backed by professional, personalized service.

Headquartered in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, our firm has specialized in MAS 90 and MAS 200 by Best Software since 1989.

Our extensive experience, exceptional service, and broad expertise assure you of our ability to solve even the toughest business problems.

If you would like to fine-tune your firm's approach to distribution, we would like to talk with you and see if MAS 90 is the right solution for you.



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