

Vendor Portal Helps Award-Winning Grocery Chain Improve Data Quality Empowering Shoppers to Make Informed Purchasing Decisions



Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc. is a family-run grocery chain located in Ontario, Canada

Headquartered in Vaughan, Ontario, Longo's employs over 6,500 team members

Longo's is the leader in online sales of home-delivered groceries www.GroceryGateway.com

Implemented Simplain Software Solution's Vendor Portal in 2017



Alicia Samuel
Vice President of
Information Technology



Ghouse Shaikadam
Manager, Centre of Excellence
and Supply Chain

Ontario-based grocery chain Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc. (commonly known as Longo's) has always cherished its past and embraced the future. In the late 1950s, three brothers opened their first grocery store in Toronto, Canada. They had a vision to provide the best experience for their shoppers. That philosophy is still at the foundation of every decision they make.

Today, Longo's operates 35 full-service grocery stores across the Greater Toronto Area, as well as www.grocerygateway.com, the leader in online sales of home-delivered groceries.

IMPROVING SHOPPER EXPERIENCE

Recently, **Longo's embarked on a business transformation project to provide the most accurate and up-to-date product information for their shoppers and for various operational decision making.** Their goal was to ensure that every product had the proper nutritional data, dimensions, pricing, and shelf life. "We wanted to help our guests make informed decisions about the products they choose to serve their families," said Alicia Samuel, Vice President of Information Technology. "To accomplish this, our guiding principle was to create a single repository for master data and pass that information on to our shoppers."

According to Ghouse Shaikadam, Manager, Centre of Excellence and Supply Chain, "The main challenge with our current system related to the quality of master data at the source and lack of data standardization. We wanted a scalable solution that would keep pace with the exponentially increasing transaction volume due to store growth and growing

business complexity. We also needed to keep up with regulatory requirements around product handling and competitive pressures in the market."

Shaikadam was concerned about the potential for supply chain disruptions with their current system, which depended on email and spreadsheets to obtain product data and pricing. This was not only time-consuming and tedious but opened the door to data integrity issues. The current system adversely impacted business and customer decision making due to a lack of reliable data at the right time and a general lack of organizational processes. Also, it was difficult to hold anyone accountable or determine who changed what data and when. The Longo's team was wasting valuable resources investigating data inaccuracies rather than serving shoppers. "We had two options. We could either increase headcount or find a software solution that enabled our suppliers to provide the data quality, reliability, and productivity that we required in a collaborative procure to pay system," said Shaikadam.

VENDOR COLLABORATION TOOL ENSURES DATA INTEGRITY

Longo's began their search for a vendor collaboration software solution that would ensure data integrity throughout its supply chain. Ultimately, they chose Vendor Portal by Simplain Software Solutions for its mix of capabilities, reliability, ease of use, and tight integration with their existing retail management software platform, Symphony RetailAI's GOLD system. **Vendor Portal simplifies the process of item setup and maintenance,**

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—Alicia Samuel, Vice President of Information Technology, Longo Brothers Fruit Markets Inc

allows the vendor to communicate cost changes and promotions, monitor purchase orders, and invoices, and is aligned with GS1 standards.

“We knew Vendor Portal would help us streamline our entire process,” said Samuel. “Simplain offered a robust vendor portal solution that addressed what Longo’s was looking for. They were the natural choice for creating seamless retail and vendor collaborations to support our initiative.”

VENDOR PORTAL INCREASES EFFICIENCY

The deployment of Vendor Portal made a tremendous impact on Longo’s business by reducing the amount of time it took to add a new item to their system. As the software continues to evolve and adapt to their needs, it is expected **they will ultimately see more than a 50% efficiency improvement in master data entry.**

The vendor portal is designed to provide a single source of data synchronization and collaboration for the Longo’s team and their external suppliers. “One of the great things about Vendor Portal is the data validation process. We can now go to our central database and pull information to pre-populate fields for vendors, which makes it quicker and easier for them,” noted Samuel. “It’s a self-service system designed to help our partners support us. Our suppliers can

make a change, and then our team can electronically review it and approve it. This reduces time and overall costs of managing data.”

As Longo’s data grows with the increase in the number of stores and vendors, Vendor Portal will help reduce costs by increasing efficiency on both sides of the equation. By ensuring data accuracy, **Longo’s will have a clearer picture of data flow and labor along with a more accurate dashboard for planning and compliance.**

IMPROVED DATA QUALITY WITH AUDIT TRAILS

Prior to Vendor Portal, Longo’s used Excel and disparate other manual systems to update supplier and item data. Their Category Management team would receive the data, enhance it, and submit it to their Master Data Team who would then key that information into their system. Given that there were so many touchpoints, there was room for a large margin of error. “Vendor Portal allowed us to connect directly to the supplier. Our vendors are now responsible for data accuracy, which allows our team to function more as data stewards than data entry clerks,” said Shaikadam. “Now, we’re able to go back in time and identify if and when a user changed data. This aligns with our master data philosophy of having pristine data and provides a definitive audit trail. The portal mitigates data

loss at every workflow node and synthesizes data with the ERP allowing the category teams to easily ramp up or ramp down vendor listings.”

A CONTINUALLY IMPROVING SYSTEM

“I’m excited that we partnered with Simplain. We have a great working relationship, and they are very receptive and willing to enhance the software to meet our needs,” said Shaikadam. “Currently, we’ve deployed the portal to handle new item introduction and item maintenance processes. We have a multi-year transformation plan, and Vendor Portal is an integral part of our evolution. We anticipate having one comprehensive vendor management solution that also includes supplier self-registration, cost management, discounts, and purchase order management.”

“We’re always thinking about continuous improvement, and asking ourselves, ‘How can we increase our capability, make it easier for our internal teams, more streamlined for our vendors, and a better experience for our shoppers?’” said Samuel. “We have worked hard and accomplished a lot. **We are now in a better position to help shoppers make informed choices about the products they purchase.**”

ABOUT SIMPLAIN

Over the past twelve years, Simplain Software Solutions has been offering ground-breaking solutions in the retail world. They’ve helped retailers and vendors in the U.S. and Canada improve their supply chain efficiencies. Working closely with executive and operational teams, Simplain offers a proven tool, Vendor Portal, that ensures data integrity and simplifies the process of item setup and maintenance.

Vendor Portal, available as an on-premise solution or SaaS offering, can be purchased as a stand-alone solution or as part of a back-end retail management system, such as Symphony GOLD. For more information, visit www.simplain.com.

50%
Increase in
Data Entry
Efficiency