



hardybrothers 

# Moving forward with success

## Planning for growth with Swords, the delivered wholesale IT solution from Sanderson

**Hardy Brothers, a renowned and respected delivered wholesaler in Northern Ireland, has strengthened operations, supported business growth and improved customer service, all whilst staying true to its roots as a small, family-owned company. A relationship with Sanderson spanning 20 years has laid the foundation for sustainable business expansion and continued success.**

**S**treamlined purchasing and sales processes, drastically reduced administrative time and accurate reporting to assist with decision-making – the Sanderson delivered wholesale IT solution, Swords, has provided Hardy Brothers with the necessary tools to thrive in the wholesale world.

Established in 1973 by Sean and Frances Hardy, Hardy Brothers supplies a wide variety of confectionery, snacks and soft drinks to retail outlets, including corner shops and independent supermarkets, in Northern Ireland. Founder Sean Hardy still

enjoys delivering orders to customers, and his son Declan, Director, is now responsible for the day-to-day running of the business, managing the sales team and negotiating with suppliers.

With 14 members of staff manning the six lorries that make up the Hardy fleet, and the 10,000 square foot warehouse in Ahoghill, County Antrim, Hardy Brothers is a substantial, delivered wholesaler with a difference: “At heart, we are still a family-run business. That sets us apart from a lot of the other companies in our industry,” explains Declan.

### Case study at a glance

#### About Hardy Brothers

Family-run delivered wholesaler offering large-scale service

#### Challenges

- Implement system to support business growth
- Improve traceability of stock
- Reduce time-consuming manual processes
- Strengthen business operations

#### Solutions

- Swords Wholesale Distribution System
- Business Intelligence

#### Benefits

- Turnover increased from £3m to £8m
- Improved cash flow
- Sales opportunities easily identified
- Business expansion supported
- 10% reduction of debtor days
- Informed decision-making with accurate stock information
- Strengthened customer and supplier relationships
- Improved companywide visibility



*"Business Intelligence has taken our business to the next level. As a result, we're able to offer better sales analysis to our clients; it's as beneficial to them as it is to us."*

**Declan Hardy**  
Director

Smaller than some it may be, but Hardy Brothers has seen a huge amount of growth for more than two decades since the implementation of the Swords solution; turnover has grown to a very healthy £8 million, from £3 million.

"We've seen steady growth, and the Sanderson solution has given us the tools to grow. We knew where we wanted to go with the business, and Swords helped us develop our ideas through to fruition," says Declan.

#### **Advanced sales reporting**

The Business Intelligence software within Swords has made the most impact on the Hardy Brothers' business recently. It has completely transformed the way the company approaches sales analysis, which in turn allows it to offer a more tailored service for customers, devising joint business plans to help them grow their own businesses. The information from Swords is central to every operation in the business; it helps Hardy Brothers to generate cost efficiencies, make informed purchasing decisions and identify growth opportunities.

"We can access sales reports and margins within seconds, and it helps us to identify areas of weakness and strength. We can then isolate

and examine sales by region, by representative, by customer, then target promotions that benefit our clients, as well as their customers," explains Declan. "Business Intelligence has been fantastic for us."

The sales analysis capabilities of Business Intelligence provides instant visibility, allowing Hardy Brothers to capture sales figures daily, so any declines can be identified quickly. Every product line can be analysed for sales trends, allowing Hardy Brothers to respond proactively. Prior to the Swords implementation, the company had to make educated guesses based on manual studies of the sales figures at the end of each year, when it was too late to make any difference to the business.

Now, it's a different story. The company has confidence in the information delivered by Swords and can use it to benefit them, as Declan explains: "For example, we were able to identify a 10 per cent decline in sales of some of the standard crisp bags. So we spoke to our suppliers who gave us better promotions, which we passed on to clients. We got the figures back up, resulting in five to six per cent growth on that line of crisps - a turnaround of 16 per cent. Swords Business



Intelligence has definitely taken our business to the next level. Our capabilities are good enough to rival leading larger companies. As a result, we're able to offer better sales analysis to our clients; it's as beneficial to them as it is to us."

The Swords solution also alerts the company to overdue payments, improving cash flow for Hardy Brothers. "We run a debt report and it shows us who is over their credit limit, or who is slower to pay. We can make a phone call and get the money in, so it helps boost cash flow."

Hardy Brothers runs a tight ship, and has a good relationship with the network of retailers they supply, so the books are balanced more often than not, but this tool has resulted in a 10 per cent reduction in debtor days.

### Increased productivity

A recent upgrade to the latest version of the Swords solution has also brought efficiencies to Hardy Brothers. The new Swords IT solution is technologically advanced delivering higher system performance levels, faster access to data, and more time-saving features which help to boost productivity for Hardy Brothers. Underpinned by a new technology platform, the solution offers high familiarity, allowing existing users to adapt to the new Swords without re-training.

"We're already seeing benefits of the latest Swords solution. The new user interface is more user-friendly; there are a lot more shortcuts from one area to another on the system itself, which makes using it for daily tasks even quicker and very efficient," says Declan.

Hardy Brothers is also exploring other solutions offered by Sanderson. The company is now trialling the powerful capabilities of Mobile CRM, an app which allows for 24 hour access to the Swords system via a smartphone, tablet and other devices.

"It's extremely useful if you're out on the road, in the van or on a call. You can give your customer copies of invoices or statements or credit notes

when you're there, you can just email direct from your phone, you can bring up price queries, you can check your stock," Declan describes. "Basically, you have direct access to anything in Swords when you're off-site or with a customer."

This increased visibility is strengthening relationships with customers, as well as improving efficiencies. Mobile CRM allows for orders to be processed directly via mobile devices and then transmitted straight to the back office system, saving time and reducing paperwork.

"It's definitely something we're interested in adding. Mobile CRM suits the way we do business, and allows us to maximise face-to-face time with our retailers for example, answering stock queries and providing quotes which increases our productivity," says Declan.

### Taking stock

Before implementing Swords, many business processes were manual, from handwritten invoices, to stock checks. The Sanderson wholesale solution has improved warehouse management and enabled better traceability of orders and stock, which has supported the company's growth. Stock replenishment is more controlled, as Hardy Brothers has visibility of real-time stock information, assisting them with purchasing decisions when stock levels are low. Stock location information is also regularly updated, reducing manual picking errors in the warehouse. As a result, customer satisfaction and order compliance has increased: "Our stock picking compliance is at 96 - 97 per cent now."

Declan is keen to continue tightening processes. The company is planning to introduce Swords Radio Frequency (RF) to further boost efficiencies both in taking deliveries from suppliers, and dispatching orders to customers.

"We want to keep improving and we're aiming for 99 per cent," Declan says. "At the minute, we're still picking the old way; a customer will give the reps an order, who will ring it through, we'll generate a picking list,

*"As a result of real-time stock location information, our stock picking compliance is at 96 - 97 per cent now, and we're aiming for 99 per cent."*

**Declan Hardy**  
Director





the staff on the warehouse floor will pick it, we'll invoice and then the order goes on the lorry for delivery," explains Declan. "Swords Radio Frequency scanners will streamline the picking operation, from managing the order to getting it out for delivery."

Currently, purchase orders are generated internally and sent out to suppliers. When goods are delivered, the order is checked manually. Declan elaborates: "We're taking maybe 10 deliveries a day and we can easily get three to four instances a week, where we are sent the wrong stock and we don't pick it up until a week later when the invoice comes in. The RF handheld devices will allow us to scan the purchase order when the driver brings the order, so we will be able to deal with stock errors immediately."

Other benefits the RF system will bring include the tracking of 'best before' dates for perishable items, ensuring these items get picked first and reducing waste stock. Also Declan anticipates efficiencies in stock takes, which are currently done manually once a quarter. "Stock takes usually take two or three days; I estimate that with up to date stock information, we will be able to reduce that by at least 50 per cent," he says.

### Sustainable business growth

With over 40 years in the wholesale industry, it is clear that Hardy Brothers are adept at staying ahead of the game, without compromising on high quality customer service and the familiar, personal approach to business they specialise in.

"The Sanderson team is very friendly, and professional. We were initially recommended Sanderson by another wholesaler, and I know both myself, and my father, have recommended them too. What can I say? Sanderson just know their stuff. They've been there every step of the way as our business has grown. We're excited to see what's next for us, and how Sanderson can help us get there." From the initial Swords implementation project, to trialling the latest Sanderson solutions, this is a relationship that works for Hardy Brothers.

"The Sanderson solution is perfectly designed for wholesalers; we've streamlined processes within our business which have made us more productive and we have maximised operational efficiencies," reflects Declan. "Since implementing Swords, we've improved visibility, strengthened relationships with our customers and suppliers, and seen consistent, substantial business growth."

### About Hardy Brothers

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**H**ardy Brothers is a growing, family-run business based in Ahoghill, County Antrim. Established in 1973, Hardy's is a delivered wholesaler, supplying confectionery, soft drinks and snacks to retailers, corner shops and independent supermarkets across Northern Ireland.



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**Declan Hardy**  
Director



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