

## Fresh solutions for one of New Zealand's most recognised horticultural businesses

CASE STUDY: LEADERBRAND – DECEMBER 2017



### OVERVIEW

LeaderBrand is one of New Zealand's most recognised and diverse horticultural businesses. Founded in 1975 by Murray McPhail, the company operates across New Zealand from its Gisborne base where Murray hails from.

The business is vertically integrated, producing, growing, harvesting, packing, marketing and distributing all of its own product domestically and internationally.

When it comes to providing IT, the LeaderBrand environment is very demanding: it's a complex business with lots of moving parts.

First there is the diversity of fresh product LeaderBrand handles, including fresh salads, stir fries, coleslaw, broccoli, lettuce, fresh sweet corn, buttercup squash pouch corn and beetroot, supplied to both domestic and global markets. There's also grapes and LeaderBrand's own brand of wine.

Then there's the seasonal nature of the farming-centric business and how that impacts processes to manage. For 4-5 months of the year the business is in turbo mode as different products come into season. In December through to March there is squash, exported to Japan, China, and Korea, not to mention salads, broccoli, and lettuce as year-round products.

LeaderBrand has just built and gone live a few months ago with a new \$20m factory to provide the capacity required to handle the demand for bagged salads.

Keeping customers supplied with fresh produce on a daily basis is a demanding business and is something that the staff at LeaderBrand are very passionate about. The standards for fresh produce are exacting. Keeping at the forefront of the latest developments in the business demands not only technology and innovation but that also has to be grounded in experience.



*"Fusion didn't seem to have boundaries of how they approached each situation like other IT suppliers – Fusion is all about bespoke solutions – in this case we are in a hybrid situation with the LeaderBrand business and supplier farms off-site. They can now have everything hosted in the cloud."*

– Darren Hart, IT advisor to LeaderBrand

## BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

### IT Consultancy services including:

- System design and build
- Server L2 – L3 Support
- Hybrid IT environment consisting of on premises servers using existing server environment and Fusion Cloud hosted servers including file, remote desktop, database (financial and ERP systems)
- Full backup of hosted and key onsite servers
- Full LAN and WAN Design & support
- Application platform support as required by ERP application developers.



## THE CHALLENGES

### LeaderBrand

Meanwhile Darren Hart has been the IT advisor/consultant to LeaderBrand from the early stages of the business. He says from simple beginnings in 1998 when there was a single server that took care of all of the systems, to 1999 when a second server was added, today there are 17 different servers that have different systems to manage.

“For example there is a manufacturing platform, various production-related systems, a SCADA facility that controls factory automation in terms of water flow, critical to food and hygiene in the factory. There is dispatch. There is a sales platform. There are over 200 fulltime staff plus 300 casuals, so that there is a massive payroll, with both permanent and seasonal staff across the course of the year.

### Fusion

When Fusion Networks came into the LeaderBrand business in 2015 to address its IT requirements, it took a while to settle down the infrastructure.

Darren says this is always an issue in taking over another supplier’s setup.

“There were difficulties with the WAN; for a company with a New Zealand-wide sales and distribution network, then it was a big problem that Auckland sales people were dropping their sessions 2 – 3 times a day, making sales and taking orders a very frustrating process.”

“Fusion took responsibility for the WAN part of business. At the end of 2015 we did an exercise for data resilience and after a contestable pitch, Fusion took the LeaderBrand business to the next level, introducing hybrid cloud hosting,” he says.

“Fusion didn’t seem to have boundaries of how they approached each situation like other IT suppliers – Fusion is all about bespoke solutions – in this case we are in a hybrid situation with the LeaderBrand business and supplier farms off-site. They can now have everything hosted in the cloud,” says Darren.

### Fortinet

LeaderBrand has at least five sites around the country with two key sites located in the Gisborne region.

There are two elements provided by Fortinet into LeaderBrand – the core firewall security appliances in High Availability (HA) mode and wireless access points, consisting of indoor and outdoor industrial AP’s to provide coverage across the admin offices, manufacturing plants and distribution facilities.

The firewalls provide all outbound and inbound security to the LeaderBrand WAN across all sites. LeaderBrand utilises the Web filtering and access control features to ensure their users are safe and using Internet resources sensibly.

“We had a period of difficulty when we first transitioned away from physical firewalls. Put simply the issue was to do with configuration. We worked with Fusion Networks, and Fortinet to solve this. It involved 8-12 weeks of trouble shooting. For me this highlighted the service and integrity of Fortinet and Fusion working as Partners to achieve the required outcomes,” Darren says.

**Fortinet** develops and markets IT security and networking hardware and software. The company is best known for the FortiGate family of security appliances, which combine many cybersecurity functions, such as web filtering, antivirus protection, deep packet inspection and intrusion detection prevention.

Fortinet works with partners such as Fusion to collaboratively integrate and provide end-to-end security for business. The Fortinet Security Fabric enables active collection and sharing of threats, along with mitigating information to improve threat intelligence, enhance overall threat awareness, and broaden threat response from end to end. Customers benefit from such joint solutions and applications as they are pre-integrated, saving time and resources in deployment, operations, and support.

## NEXT STEPS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Matt Oakley joined the company in June this year to head up IT at LeaderBrand. Matt says: "I joined the company because after 20 years in medium to large corporate IT, spanning 3 continents, I was excited to come across an opportunity in a new industry with a family owned business. The Gisborne location and having family in New Zealand were also draw cards."

Matt Oakley says: "We have gone down the track clustering Fortinet's firewalls. We are currently reviewing relocating the Fortinet firewall cluster to be hosted at the Fusion cloud locations."

"One of the key challenges is to enable the business to function 24/7 even when maintenance on systems are required to be done."

**"We're at the final stage of cloud migration. The benefits of working with Fusion are obvious in that they are agile and flexible, they can configure a new service with simply an email and a phone call, what used to take weeks takes only a few hours now to configure."**

– Matt Oakley, Head of IT at LeaderBrand

"As a business like LeaderBrand grows in size it is important to maintain the strengths of a culture built on deep industry knowledge and a passion for delivering customer satisfaction, whilst seeking out opportunities to automate processes and ensure that the management team maintain up-to-date visibility of the expanding operation. This is where IT and the injection of digital platforms will support LeaderBrand in delivering an industry leading experience across the supply chain and most importantly to the customers taking our produce home for themselves and their families.

Mobility will also be a key driver for us. Whether we are looking at our use of scanners by factory or dispatch personnel, or the use of tablets by our crop managers out in the field, the ability to have up to the minute data in the hands of these LeaderBrand team members is critical.

We expect that by continuing to work with Fusion we can continue to provide a high level of service from our infrastructure in a secure manner. Delivering a connected seamless user experience whether in the office or out in the operation, in a cost effective manner is a critical success factor for the LeaderBrand and Fusion partnership."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### LeaderBrand

To find out more about LeaderBrand visit [LeaderBrand.co.nz](http://LeaderBrand.co.nz)

### Fusion Networks

To find out more about Fusion Networks visit [fusionnetworks.co.nz](http://fusionnetworks.co.nz)

## SUMMARY

### Business

LeaderBrand Group, New Zealand

### Sector

Horticulture

### Challenges

- LeaderBrand operates 24/7 production facilities during peak times, maintaining / deploying an IT system that can keep up with the demands of such a business.
- LeaderBrand are also deploying a new ERP system that is designed to assist with plant automation, reporting and tracking and traceability of product. Systems that relate to the ERP system have a particular set of requirements that needs to be met as well as needing to support the 24/7 nature of the business.

### IT Solutions

- System design and build
- Server L2 – L3 Support
- Hybrid IT environment consisting of on premises servers using existing server environment and Fusion Cloud hosted servers including file, remote desktop, database (financial and ERP systems )
- Full backup of hosted and key onsite servers
- Full LAN and WAN Design & support

### Results

- Seamless IT service and cloud solution, with single provider managing all aspects of the IT Infrastructure
- Collaboration with Fortinet and use of the Fortinet Security Fabric to mitigate threat intelligence, enhance overall threat awareness, and broaden threat response from end to end

### Next Steps

- Replace aged ERP system that will not scale with a variant of the Microsoft Navision – LinkFresh, designed for the horticulture business sector
- Deliver deep insight in to the business operation through the delivery of effective reporting and analytics This will include forecasting and what-if analysis. Deliver a seamless experience from the office to the factory floor and the farm through enhanced use of mobile solutions.