

An Interview With Jason Irvan, Director of IT at Graco Supply Company

We all have felt the pain of a poorly-run software implementation. Maybe it took longer than expected, cost more, or failed to deliver the expected business results. Perhaps you didn't get the support you needed from the software provider. Whatever the cause, many people are rightfully wary of supply chain software.

At LeanDNA, we understand this common issue and have created an implementation process with the goal of keeping things simple. Our tool has pre-built integrations with most major ERP systems to help reduce inventory, manage shortages, display supplier performance, and track lean projects from a single easy-to-use platform. And all this is designed to take only a small amount of your IT team's time.

We sat down with Jason Irvan, Director of Information Technology at Graco Supply Company, for a real-life look into the details of implementing LeanDNA.

What are your responsibilities at Graco Supply Company, and what does your technology landscape look like?

I am the senior technology manager at Graco Supply. I steer the direction of our IT team, software development team, and information services organization. We are a predominately Microsoft shop with all the typical trappings of a distribution company. That includes an ERP system, order management, inventory management, purchasing, and more. We also have a fairly broad set of custom-developed tools that our teams have written over the years to improve our day-to-day processes and help us deliver our products.

OVERVIEW

Company

Graco Supply Company: Distributor of Aerospace Chemicals and Consumables

Key LeanDNA Benefits

- Significant inventory management savings
- Better inventory and purchasing management processes

Key Benefits For IT

- Eliminated need for large data warehousing project, freeing significant IT team time
- Implementation required only a few hours of IT labor
- Strong customer service throughout implementation



“[LeanDNA’s implementation was] amazing. I have not dealt with this level of professionalism from an implementation team in a long time... Issues were resolved quickly and communicated clearly.”

- Supply Chain Manager

What were your expectations for the LeanDNA implementation process?

Before we started? Honestly, I had a few reservations. We had bought a couple of systems over the last four or five years that promised to deliver the same tools that LeanDNA was promising. We found black box software packages and BI tools didn't meet our needs. Because we are in aerospace and have complex rules around products due to regulation, quality control, and other requirements, they all fell flat on their faces. I had some skepticism over how it was going to work because historically I had some bad experiences.

How did the LeanDNA implementation actually go?

Amazing. I have not dealt with this level of professionalism from an implementation team in a long time.

The LeanDNA team was on the ball. Issues were resolved quickly and communicated clearly. LeanDNA went above and beyond any team I've worked with in probably a decade.

How long did you and your team spend on the LeanDNA implementation?

I probably spent 8-10 hours in meetings before the implementation. After that, it was another 2 days building and developing schemas and delivering information to the LeanDNA team. So not much from me.

My Database Analyst was also involved some. He probably spent 4-6 hours working on data and data schemas. The testing and qualification portion of the implementation was really in the Operations part of the business, so IT did very little of that.

LeanDNA is a tool that provides actionable recommendations for inventory and shortage management. How were Graco's systems tackling this prior to using LeanDNA?

In a lot of cases, inventory and purchasing management were active blind spots. We were trying to find a way to surface information around this. Inventory and purchasing were predominantly controlled in our ERP system, using standard Crystal reports and SSRS reporting that had been developed over time.

We had a lack of visibility in the tools we had available that were causing us to make errors. When errors did occur, we were not catching them until it was too late to address the problem. This led to us keeping substantial amounts of duplicated or unneeded inventory in stock. Long story short, we were using reports and weren't getting our needs met.

What benefits has Graco seen since implementing LeanDNA?

I can tell you it has saved us tens of thousands of dollars just in the last few months. And that's just in human errors that LeanDNA allowed us to catch before they became actual costs to the company. Things like Purchase Orders that were double-entered or double-ordered, or inventory sitting on a back shelf that we thought was at the right level and wasn't, are among the weird cases in our inventory that LeanDNA has brought to light. It helps Graco better manage inventory and purchasing.

For my team specifically, it allowed us to cancel a very large project and focus our efforts on other business problems for the company. We were going to have to tackle a very big inventory cube within our data warehouse. Because LeanDNA addressed our need and filled the void in the system, we didn't have to develop and architect this cube.

What advice do you have for other IT teams going through a LeanDNA implementation?

It's pretty simple – just let LeanDNA do what they do. The implementation was simple. I really enjoyed working with the LeanDNA team.

What's next for the Graco Supply IT team?

We are looking into new ways to improve our understanding of customer purchasing behaviors and buying patterns.

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