

IFS upgrade implementation ensures future proof seamless connectivity for Singer Sri Lanka



An IFS customer for 15 years, in 2020 Singer Sri Lanka finalized a complete upgrade of its IFS ERP system as part of its continuous digitalization strategy. The implementation has ensured seamless connectivity across commercial and retail network operations, introducing the latest functionality with minimal customization.

Singer, established in Sri Lanka for more than 145 years, began life as the manufacturer and retailer of Singer sewing machines.

Since the 1970s the company has diversified dramatically, transforming from a single product business to a multi-channel, multi-brand, multi-product operation. Today the organization is Sri Lanka's largest retailer of household consumer durable goods, partnering some 60 leading technology and electronics goods brands and home appliances and retailing both online and through a branch network of 430 showrooms across the island.

Mahesh Wijewardene, Group Chief Executive Officer, has no doubts about the value of digitalization across the operation, including the need to run an advanced ERP solution with the latest updates and functionality. "Because of the complexity of the business, we rely heavily on our ERP and IT investment to deliver business solutions. We were mindful that our current version was approaching end of life, and that support and security updates would eventually become an issue. To ensure business continuity for the next 5-10 years we took the decision to upgrade our instance of IFS at the end of 2020. By August 2022 the new implementation was complete, tested and live."

Extended functionality, smooth transition

Some 2,170 users across 13 divisions make use of IFS for areas including commercial credit and sales, trade operations, financial control, warehousing and distribution. One of the new capabilities added during the upgrade was manufacturing. "Singer also produces white goods like refrigerators and washing machines, light engineering items like water pumps, furniture, and, of course, sewing machines. The IFS manufacturing module is now operating in three of our four production facilities."

About Singer Sri Lanka

With a reach of over 5.7 million customers and nearly 30% of the country's population, Singer is Sri Lanka's market leader in consumer durables, retailing some 60 international brands.

With a 145-year heritage, the Singer Group also manufactures high-quality refrigerators, washing machines, sewing machines, water pumps and furniture.

The company employs around

9-10,000 staff (direct and indirect), and generated 2021/22 revenues of 76.85 bn Rupees.

The Group is a subsidiary of the Hayleys PLC conglomerate.

The Singer logo features the word 'SINGER' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid red rectangular background.

Whilst it's currently too early to quantify specific gains seen since the upgrade, over the coming months Wijewardene will be monitoring expected business improvements in productivity, business engagement, savings and customer experience. "We can already observe positive changes. For example, the new screen formats are reducing customer waiting times in showrooms, and using IFS Lobbies we've already created over 50 dashboards for the business. In terms of governance and compliance, outstanding audit findings have been eliminated, dual controls are being implemented, and IFRS automation is in place. We also have a far better security system infrastructure."

Since implementation and go-live was in the middle of COVID pandemic restrictions, all staff training needed to happen remotely using videocalls. "We had a fantastic team that ensured our 2,170 users were successfully briefed on transitioning to the new IFS system," says Wijewardene.

"The future-proof seamless connectivity IFS now confers to third party data systems, government agencies, banks and our partner and supplier organizations is critical."

Mahesh Wijewardene, Group Chief Executive Officer, Singer Sri Lanka

Bespoke module with minimal core customization

For the latest implementation Wijewardene's team sought to minimize customization, keeping core module code as standard as possible. Aside of this, Singer uses a bespoke-built module to administer its hire purchase offer, a consumer finance product that Wijewardene believes Singer machines invented when it first began selling sewing machines 160 years ago.

In terms of future business growth, embracing digitalization and leveraging Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are key strategies. "Servicing almost 6 million customers every year, we have access to extremely valuable data that we need to capture, mine, analyze and build into our workflows," says Wijewardene. "The future-proof seamless connectivity IFS Applications 10 now confers to third party data systems, government agencies, banks and our partner and supplier organizations is also critical".

The country's current economic and political uncertainty has temporarily placed considerations of moving IFS from

on-premise to running in the cloud on hold. "Our focus is on remaining profitable over the next two years, which means slowing any Capex investment for a while," says Wijewardene.



Implementation journey

Wijewardene is impressed with the collaborative IFS approach. “The support and the delivery we have had from the local IFS team based in Sri Lanka has been excellent. We had a task force of 10 of our IT team plus a non-technical divisional support panel representing functions like marketing, distribution and commerce all working together. The success of our implementation, and our

15-year relationship with IFS, is a function of the capabilities, competencies and management on both sides.

“Our parent company, Hayleys PLC, the largest conglomerate in Sri Lanka, is predominantly running on SAP. So it is testament to our belief in the product that we have consistently won our business case to remain with IFS.”

Moment of Service™

How does Wijewardene see IFS impacting Singer’s service delivery and commercial performance? “There are really two parts to our Moment of Service: one is the experience for outsiders, the other is the experience for internal parties,” he explains. “Outsiders, like our customers or institutions like banks, want convenience from us. How quickly can a Singer showroom generate the invoice and take payment? Is the information automated and therefore accurate?

“For internal parties, it’s about different departments being able to work seamlessly together, which comes down to sharing real-time data simultaneously to accelerate and optimize operations. Other important internal factors are system reliability and ease of use.”

Concludes Wijewardene, “Our continued commercial success and close partnership with IFS has also benefited local community CSR projects. In addition to our own education initiatives, such as 60 Singer Fashion Academies, in 2020 we partnered with the IFS Foundation to renovate the maternity ward at the Welusumanapura community hospital, providing kitchen equipment to complete the fit out.”

Benefits seen using IFS

- Seamless connectivity to internal and external stakeholders
- Single, real-time version of the truth
- Automated invoice generation
- Minimal modifications to core code
- Bespoke reports and dashboards using IFS lobbies
- Manufacturing module capabilities now adopted

Find out more

Further information, e-mail info@ifs.com, contact your local IFS office or visit our web site, ifs.com

