

## Continuing Tradition

### RICH PRODUCTS CORPORATION UPDATES PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO CONTINUE DELIVERING INNOVATIVE FIRSTS

For more than 60 years, Rich Products Corporation defined itself through innovative breakthroughs. In 1945, Founder Robert E. Rich, Sr. discovered that the soy bean could be frozen, thawed and whipped. The resulting product, Rich's Whip Topping — hailed as “the miracle cream from the soy bean” — revolutionized food processing and opened up a new world of non-dairy products to the growing frozen food industry. The “miracle cream” later served as the springboard for a series of non-dairy products including: Rich's Bettercreme Icing and Filling (1978) and Rich's On Top non-dairy dessert topping packaged in a pastry bag with its own decorator tip (1986), among others.

In its next 60 years, Rich's plans to grow and thrive as a global industry leader through new product development, strategic acquisitions and a relentless commitment to excellence. But to do so in a competitive industry that defines innovation as its “lifeblood,” Rich's had to replace an inefficient homegrown, Excel-based product development process with an automated product lifecycle management (PLM) tool.

“As we strive to be our customers' trusted first choice, it's important that we have the right processes and systems in place to maximize our product development opportunities,” says

Trish Hudson, senior portfolio/process manager, Rich's.

It is also important that the new PLM tool support Rich's Stage-Gate process, which was adopted in 2002/2003 when the organization realized a need to improve execution of new product development projects and how it managed the resources associated with those projects.

In 2006, after a thorough market research assessment was completed, including in-depth supply market research of PLM vendors, Rich's chose Sopheon Accolade as a fitting enabler to its Stage-Gate process.

The project, however, did not come without its share of challenges. The largest being Rich's outdated method of managing Stage-Gate and project data through a series of very large and outdated Excel workbooks.

“We had accumulated three years'

worth of a significantly large quantity of data, all of which we wanted loaded into Accolade as history,” explains Hudson. “This data presented our greatest challenge in the implementation, but was overcome with the right resources and time being applied to the implementation.”

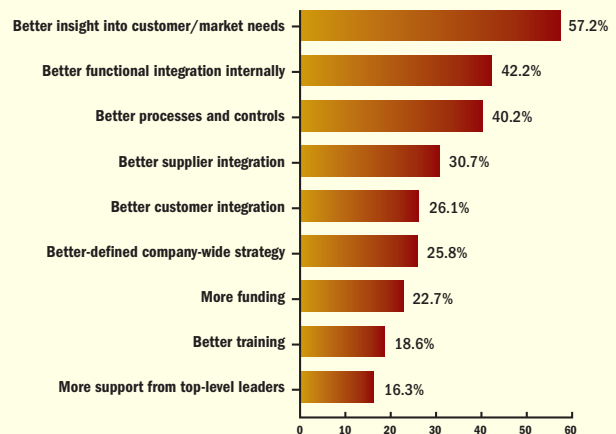
January 2006 marked Rich's launch of Sopheon Accolade, with history

#### FAST FACT

### Customer is Key

According to the Capgemini and *IndustryWeek* 2007 Manufacturing Study, “Leading through Growth,” only 17.9 percent of 273 U.S. manufacturing executives believe that their companies are “world class” in the critical area of product innovation. More than any other method, survey respondents say they could strengthen their position by knowing more about their customers:

#### What would most improve your company's product innovation process (select three)?





**Rich Products' original workforce, (from left) Herb Kusche, Robert E. Rich, Sr., Jerry Hannon and Joe Robida, showcase one of the first batches of the revolutionary product known as Rich's Whip Topping – "the miracle cream from the soy bean."**

and active project information present in reports and portfolio information. "The goal of the implementation was to provide better access through a shared system to all new product development and product change projects, to manage resource requirements more effectively, and to have a mechanism to provide enhanced portfolio visibility and analysis through enhanced reporting capabilities," says Hudson. "All of these objectives were achieved."

Accolade is now being leveraged within its North American Business Group business team to manage all projects related to new product development and product changes, as well as the International Business Group for the same purpose. The company also utilizes a resource-planning module hand-in-hand with the project data to

manage supply and demand of resources associated with those projects.

In the first quarter of 2007, Rich's implemented a major enhancement to the software, which was rolled out to an additional 85 users within the North America and International business groups.

"The most meaningful outcome has been the access and visibility into the entire portfolio of new products and product change projects for all of our associates, including key resources in marketing, research and development, quality assurance and operations," says Hudson.

Moving forward, Rich's will implement the second phase of Accolade, continue training and strengthen its focus on the use of best practices associated with project management, Stage-Gate and Accolade.