



# The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

## Final Copy of Case Study

**Year:**

2013

**Status:**

Laureate

**Organization Name:**

Plum Organics

**Organization URL:**

[www.plumorganics.com](http://www.plumorganics.com)

**Project Name:**

Providing Healthier and Tastier Food to Babies, Toddlers and Children

**Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry.**

Collaboration

**Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)**

Founded on the belief that healthy eating can begin right from the start, Plum Organics® is a leading organic kids nutrition company with a focus on nourishing Generation Organic from the highchair to the lunchbox. Available nationwide, Plum Organics offers a comprehensive lineup of organic meals and snacks for babies, toddlers and school-aged children (Plum Kids). As a young, fast-growing company, Plum Organics had not previously deployed an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. To support our growth, senior management wanted to integrate onto one common platform all the information the company needed to conduct business. This would allow the staff to perform their jobs more efficiently in executing business processes. More importantly, such a system would free up

more time to focus on the company's core mission: providing healthy organic, delicious meals and snacks for babies, toddlers and kids. Plum Organics wanted the entire business to collaborate using the same data, parameters and processes. Until that point, the staff coordinated tasks by relying on spreadsheets, manual processes, and e-mails. This approach required an inordinate amount of tactical time as the company grew and depleted the time spent on strategic initiatives and planning. To take on the challenge, Plum Organics, with the assistance of SAP's Implementation team and Navigator Business Systems, deployed SAP Business ByDesign, a cloud-based ERP solution on which Plum Organics can run its entire business financials, human resources, sales, procurement, customer service, and the supply chain. With SAP Business ByDesign, data is now readily available, clean, consistent, concise and accurate. The company can now generate accurate reports automatically rather than manually mining data from spreadsheets. This creates more time for Plum Organics to focus on its core mission and in the long run translates to providing even more organic meals and snacks to youngsters.

**When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)**

Project implementation was completed in November 2012. The company has deployed SAP Business ByDesign in phases, first leveraging the financial, sales, planning and distribution capabilities to streamline the handling of orders from initial placement all the way to receiving payments.

**Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)**

Most of the SAP Business ByDesign capabilities that Plum Organics plans to leverage have been deployed, but the company is evaluating the human resources module, which may be deployed at some point in the future.

**Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)**

With the deployment of SAP Business ByDesign technology, Plum Organics employees can now interact with each other more efficiently and on a timely basis. "The enhanced visibility that SAP provides enables increased team collaboration leading to tighter engagement and more timely execution," said Michael Meyer, Chief Operating Officer of Plum Inc. "This capability allows us to

invest more company resources to business expansion, product innovation, customer service and consumer engagement." The Plum Organics' staff can focus on more strategic initiatives because they no longer have to manually manage information. Since many processes are now automated, personnel can work more closely with existing suppliers, retailers, and invest more in product development to bring new products online faster and deliver them to the children's parents. "Our business processes combined with the SAP system enables us to more efficiently operate as individuals as well as interact with each other as one company. Our employees are now a tighter team that are able to work more as an integrated whole," said Beth Wilson, VP of Operations at Plum Inc.

**Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Plum Organics, SAP and Navigator Business Systems collaborated to create a blueprint for other companies that work with manufacturing and distribution partners to become more efficient in managing business processes. Creating an ERP system that allows for collaboration with business partners can be challenging, but Plum Organics used an innovative approach relative to the processes by which they selected the solution, led the project team, collaborated with staff, and addressed issues in real time. The team also adhered to a tight schedule and became fully committed during the two-month deployment. From the board level down, there was a full commitment of all company resources that enabled optimal collaboration. Plum Organics is already realizing the benefits of improved operational and financial reporting, and planning-side improvements that will meet customer needs more timely and more efficiently. Consistently deploying advanced technologies such as SAP Business ByDesign has helped Plum Organics revolutionize the baby food category, which was previously categorized by low-performing, commoditized products in glass jars. Plum Organics introduced a first-to-market spouted pouch that has single-handedly revolutionized a dormant baby food category. Plum's products are differentiated as they feature organically grown food; a change in the cooking process (lightly vs. over cooked) that helps retain flavor and nutrients; and flexible, lightweight packaging that makes products easier for babies to hold and for parents to transport. The product portfolio contains unique culinary-inspired ingredient profiles that mix vegetables, fruits, dairy and whole grains together, creating kid crave-able products with high nutritional value.



**If there are any other details that the judges should know about this project, please note them here. (In 300 words or less.)**

Plum Organics is a design-driven organization with an innovative approach in all areas of the business. SAP plays a role in this by providing innovative technology that enables the creation of forward-looking products. SAP technologies are dynamic, a culture that aligns strongly with Plum Organics. As part of this project, Plum Organics also integrated additional third-party platforms including forecasting and sales orders solutions. With these additional solutions, managers can more effectively forecast now that they have greater visibility into inventory levels. These platforms allow for more specific inventory reporting and ultimately greater success by being able to make better-informed business decisions. In our rapidly growing business we have national distribution through strategic accounts with retailers like TARGET, Babies "R" Us and Safeway. Having immediate access to our product inventory, our various points of distribution across the country, and up-to-date promotional spend allow us to be more opportunistic and supportive when new opportunities are presented by our key customers. Our mission is to nourish every little one with the organic nutrition they need to flourish. However, a critical part of what we strive to do is get those nutritious products into the hands of many more families and children who could otherwise not afford them or have limited access to nutrition. We work with a network of non-profit partners such as Convoy of Hope and Baby Buggy to ensure that as much Plum product as possible is distributed to families across the country. In addition to our ongoing donation stream, disaster relief is an area of focus that requires quick and clear access to company inventory and distribution. When disasters like Hurricane Sandy strike, having visibility into inventory enables us to quickly determine how much product we can make available to the affected families.