

Process control

What will be key for future success in the bakery trade? In my opinion, it will be process control; the knowledge about the factors governing and influencing a process and the knowledge on how and by what means these factors can be controlled. This is not limited to production and logistics processes but also includes all processes within a company and all external processes that affect a company. Take a simple example – a sales action for a product or a range of products in any bakery outlet or in the food retail trade. Here, the only information available today is whether the product was sold at the point of sale or not. This is rather retroactive information, more a historical fact than a parameter that can be controlled. In general, no information is provided as to who bought the product, in what quantities or in which sales packs, whether the products were bought together with others and, most importantly, if it would have been possible to sell larger quantities. The control is carried out more emotionally than rationally.

Sophisticated but also expensive business intelligence solutions are often only available to larger companies who use these to control production and sales. Of course, market research is needed as well, but this can also be done on a low level by chain store businesses. Loyalty cards provide general information; special discount actions indicate preferences on times of purchase, information channels, number of children in the family and also whether the customer often invites guests or prefers to buy large packs, probably for stock-keeping in the home freezer. The purchases by an individual customer and the specific facts gleaned can be used to collect information which together with observations reported by the sales staff can be used for controlling sales processes.

By the way, process control in production can also be improved. Many parameters are determined and recorded but applied only after everything has already been done. Therefore, the joint approach by IsernHäger, the University of Hanover and the baking company Harry Brot is exciting. They have developed an online method for the determination of acidity and pH of dough while still in the fermenter. It may be only one detail in the overall production process, but it is a decisive one for the quality of the final product.

One thing is important for all the information recorded or collected – assessment and implementation in real time. We are used to IT people working in many companies, but only a few of them integrate the potential that their job offers in planning and decision making. This has to change! Wrong decisions in information technology will get more expensive in the future because they impair the compatibility of a company. Nobody can afford that anymore!

Sincerely yours,



++ Hildegard Keil, editor-in-chief
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