


CASE STUDY

SAGE 200 & MANAGED IT SERVICES

► BRADLEYS

 Business Partner

Microsoft Partner



MANAGED IT SERVICES FROM PINNACLE HELP BRADLEYS KEEP FOOD ON THE MOVE



CLIENT PROFILE

Bradleys is a bakery and foodservice distribution specialist based in Ashford, Kent, serving businesses throughout the South East. From early days in the 1960s when founder Fred Bradley ran the business solo, the company now employs a team of over 30 people and has a turnover in excess of £8 million.





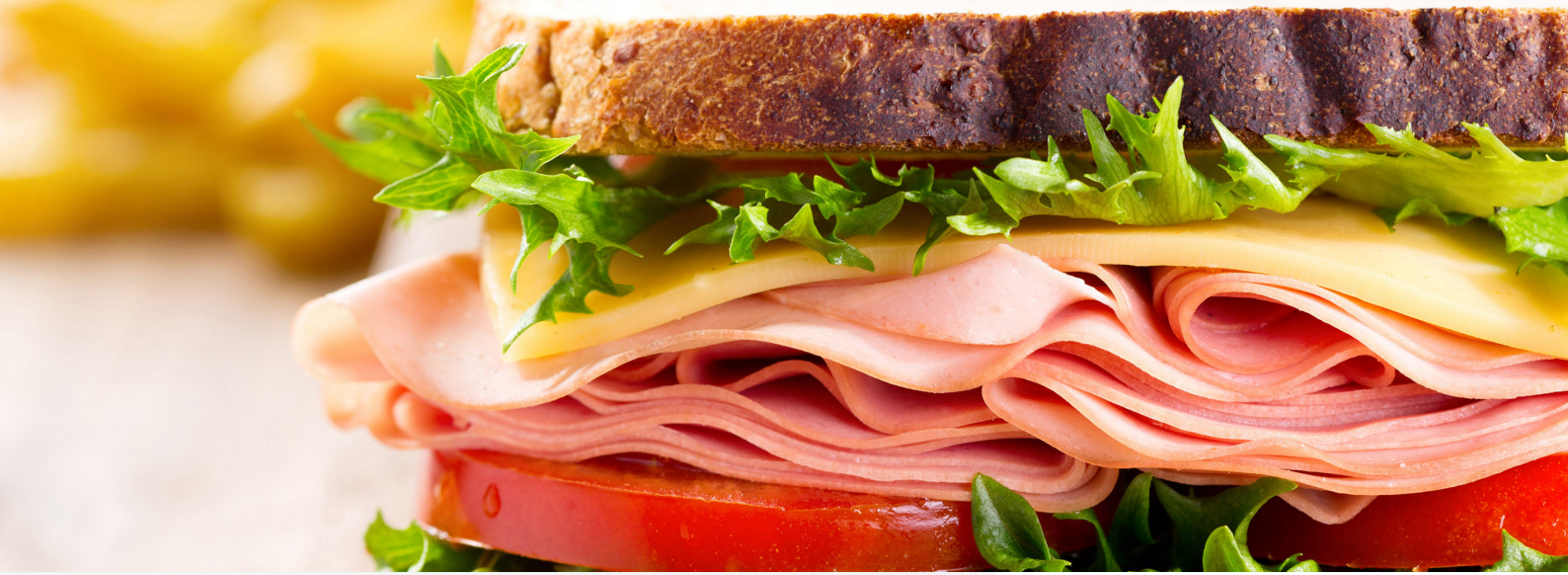
SUCCESSING IN A WORLD OF FOOD INFLATION

General Manager Chris Linkins describes the challenges that come with operating a successful food business, **“Increased competition, currency fluctuations and the rising cost of food place any business in the sector, even a well-established one such as Bradleys, under great pressure.”**

The business is a heavy user of the full suite of Sage 200 financials and commercials for essential business functions such as stock control, purchase ordering, invoicing, financials and payroll. Third-party software, including an order entry system, is tightly integrated with Sage 200 to enable accurate, timely reporting business-wide.

Chris praises the Sage system for its versatility in moulding to the business, **“Being able to generate reliable, upto- date information helps us to stay ahead in a highly competitive market.”**

The company’s website (www.bradleysfoods.co.uk) also links into Sage, reducing the need to rekey pricing details. Chris remarks, **“We can push information from Sage into our webstore at the click of a button. With thousands of product lines to maintain, it’s definitely made us more productive.”**



COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT UNDER ONE ROOF

Bradleys relies on Sage Platinum Reseller Pinnacle for support of its IT systems, website and telecommunications infrastructure. One innovation by Pinnacle quite early in the relationship was to provide employees with remote access to core business systems.

Chris explains, “Pinnacle gave our sales reps out on the road the same access to business information, such as pricing and stock levels, as if they were in the office. Similarly, senior managers catching up in the evenings at home have easy yet secure access to business data. Compared with even five years ago, we now operate in a 24x7 world. With mobile phones, electronic communications and online ordering, the traditional 9 to 5 is a thing of the past and this facility has been critical in honing our business agility.”

Chris points out, “The reason why we have expanded Pinnacle’s sphere of responsibility to cover telecoms, email and so on over the years is that they did such a good job on our core Sage 200 system. If we ever ask, ‘Can we do this?’ – extracting a new report, for instance – we get the answer we need.”



FOCUS ON SECURITY

Chris cites robust security as an example of Pinnacle's added value: **"As the company grows and we have more users accessing our systems and the data held on them, it's essential to protect the business from internet-borne threats. Pinnacle set up VPNs (virtual private networks) to enable us to work remotely in a more secure environment."**

Pinnacle also recommended that Bradleys take a look at Sophos, detailing the associated costs and benefits. **"We decided that it was an opportunity to gain greater peace of mind. After all, if we couldn't log in one morning, the business would quickly grind to a halt."**

The Sophos implementation went smoothly: **"Pinnacle's on-site consultant explained what would be involved and worked round us during the day to minimise disruption and make the implementation of this phenomenally important software as painless as possible."**

Chris feels the company is in a strong position to comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which introduces draconian penalties for breaches in data security. He recalls the time when Pinnacle helped to fend off a so-called 'brute force' attack, where an attacker tries multiple passwords in the hope of eventually striking it lucky: **"Even though it was a bank holiday, Pinnacle stepped up to the plate to help us out. You can't put a price on that level of service."** Continuous off-site backup of data, which Pinnacle also manages, further strengthens business resilience.

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MANAGING ACQUISITIONS AND GROWTH SPURTS

The Bradleys management team is constantly thinking ahead, with guidance from Pinnacle. Chris says, **“Pinnacle has ensured that we never run out of road in terms of IT capacity, so we always have room to grow. They are also our eyes and ears on what’s happening at Sage and brief us well in advance on any developments coming down the line.”**

Similarly, Pinnacle has helped to bring new businesses into the Bradleys fold. In addition to organic growth, Bradleys has made three strategic acquisitions while Pinnacle has been its technical support partner.

Chris outlines some of the challenges in integrating the IT infrastructure of these businesses: **“In the first of these acquisitions, the workforce relocated to our Ashford premises, which meant adding new users and new email accounts to our network. In a second acquisition, of a company in Sandwich, we brought the incumbent Sage 50 package and users into our set-up and security processes, which required two days of technical effort on Pinnacle’s part. Finally, with our most recent acquisition, signed and sealed just weeks ago, we will be migrating the acquired company’s cloud-based business systems over to Sage.”**

Chris observes that handling the technicalities of an acquisition is no mean task: **“Pinnacle has given us the tools to manage all these scenarios, which involve integrating new product ranges with our original range of 3,500 products.”** The flexibility offered by server virtualisation technology plays a key role in integrating new companies and expanding resources to meet business demand. Chris says, **“The huge benefit of virtualisation is that we can sort out any issues before migrating to a live environment. In the past, it would have been ‘fingers crossed’. Now I can be confident it will work on the day. Pinnacle installed a hypervisor and this allows us to ‘play’ in the background with incorporating our acquired businesses and to experiment with different scenarios.”** Meeting statutory obligations. For example, it generates monthly and annual returns automatically for subcontractors.

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A STRONG BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

Reviewing Pinnacle's contribution to Bradleys' commercial success, Chris says, **"The biggest thing for us is trust and we invest a lot of trust in Pinnacle to care for the day-to-day systems on which we depend absolutely. I've personally worked with Pinnacle for seven years now. Others in the company have worked with them much longer. Pinnacle advice is always good advice and is focused on our needs. We never feel that we're just being sold another product."**

Managing Director Graham Linkins is one member of the Bradleys leadership team whose relationship with Pinnacle stretches back many years. He comments, "So many IT companies try to blind you with science – you can't see the wood for the trees. But Pinnacle always communicates clearly. We've built close working relationships with members of the Pinnacle support team, so there's always someone we can contact by name for personal service if we need help or advice. **"Graham concludes, "All this explains why, despite regular approaches from their rivals, we always stick with Pinnacle. They have supported our growth process and helped us to achieve our business ambitions."**

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