

CASE STUDY

# Food & Beverage Wholesaler Boosts Growth by 21% by Spotting Issues Early and Uncovering New Opportunities



Wholesale - Food & Beverage



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Gareth Roberts  
Account Manager

Country Fare  
Foodservice



**500**  
DAILY ORDERS



**700+**  
CUSTOMERS

Before the sun rises, the team at Country Fare Foodservice is already hard at work—sorting fresh produce, packing orders, and preparing deliveries for restaurants, cafés, and caterers across southern England.

Since 2004, this independent, family-run business has built a reputation for quality, reliability, and personal service in a fast-moving industry. But beyond their fresh produce and baked goods, what truly sets them apart is their culture. “Led by a husband-and-wife team, we value each other, look out for one another, and work well as a team,” shares Gareth Roberts, Account Manager. That deep sense of family and commitment is at the heart of everything they do.

With 24/7 operations, 700 customers, and 4,500 different products, Country Fare is always on the move. Every night, they handle around 500 orders and pack up an average of 12000 individual items, making sure fresh produce, baked goods, and dairy reach restaurants, cafés, and caterers across southern England.

## Manually Tracking Sales Data

Accurate, up-to-date sales data is crucial to keeping up with this demanding pace. Initially, Country Fare Foodservice tracked its massive sales operation manually—a slow, labour-intensive process. Employees spent hours entering data by hand and combing through spreadsheets, only for the information to quickly become outdated, leading to errors and inefficiencies.

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With manual data tracking, Country Fare couldn't get a detailed view of its sales data, making it hard to analyse trends, spot opportunities, and react to shifts in demand and supply. "We could see the total amount a customer spent but had no way to break it down by individual products. In one case, a single customer accounted for 80% of a product's sales and we had no way of knowing that—if they stopped buying, we'd be stuck with a year's worth of stock," explains Roberts.

## A More Granular View of Customers

To solve this, Country Fare needed a smarter way to track sales and gain deeper insights into customer buying patterns. Country Fare chose sales-i, a SugarCRM company, as its sales intelligence platform. "The platform is very intuitive, making it easy to learn and onboard new employees," shares Roberts. The sales team quickly and easily adopted the solution. "Everything just works. We can quickly integrate it into daily operations without the need for constant back-and-forth," Roberts adds. When adjustments are needed, support is always quick to respond.

Today, every sales representative starts their day by reviewing sales figures. They look at each customer's spending patterns—whether they have increased or decreased spending or stopped buying a particular product. "sales-i lets us analyse data from multiple angles—comparing year-on-year trends, short-term changes, and specific product gaps. You can pinpoint exactly when a customer's buying habits shifted and take action," notes Roberts. If a customer's overall spending remains stable but they've stopped ordering dairy, for instance, that signals that a competitor may have stepped in.

## Slicing and Dicing by Sector and Product

With sales-i, Country Fare analyses entire sectors to spot sales opportunities. By categorising customers into specific groups—like pubs with food—they can quickly pinpoint discrepancies. "For example, if 30% of pubs purchase a particular item, but 70% don't, that signals an opportunity to introduce it to the rest," explains Roberts.

**"Much of our success with current customers is only possible because of the data we get from sales-i. It's become so ingrained in our daily work as account managers that not having it would be like a construction worker missing a hammer or screwdriver."**

Gareth Roberts,  
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Country Fare also relies on sales-i to monitor profit margins. With fresh produce prices changing daily, the sales-i low gross product report flags any products at risk of being sold below cost, allowing the company to adjust pricing immediately and prevent losses.

## Easier Access to Data

Finally, Country Fare uses sales-i to provide detailed spending reports for customers who request them. These reports break down exactly how much each site has spent and the average price per unit, helping customers with stock-taking and budgeting. "The ability to generate customer-friendly PDF reports and send them over quickly is a huge advantage," adds Roberts.

With an automated, centralised, reliable platform, Country Fare sales representatives save on average 20% of their time on data analysis and reporting. "Our sales rep Tim remembers the days of carrying paper reports in the boot of his car and manually checking purchasing histories," adds Roberts. "He loves sales-i because it eliminates the need for a full day of prep before meetings—he can pull up all the necessary data in the car park just before walking into a meeting. That efficiency alone saves him at least a day each week."

## Averting Disasters, Seizing Opportunities

With comprehensive sales insights, Country Fare can easily identify opportunities or spot early warning signs to fix issues before they snowball into larger losses. “If I notice that a customer has forgotten to place their order during the previous night, I can get in touch with them before 11 AM, and we can process it and deliver their goods before lunchtime. In many cases, we’re able to react within a couple of hours,” notes Roberts. “This proactive customer service helps us earn customer trust, strengthening our relationships.”

sales-i has been especially helpful during crises. “During the COVID-10 pandemic, sales-i helped us track customers who were returning to the market. Having two years’ worth of historical data helped us remind them of products they used to buy and nudge them into purchasing them again,” Roberts adds.

## Dazzling the Customers

A granular, real-time view of sales gives Country Fare a competitive edge in customer interactions. “We now go into meetings extremely prepared. We know exactly what the customer is buying and if they’ve had changes in their spending habits. We’re always ahead of the conversation, which lets us build confidence and demonstrate real value to customers.”

Over the years, the company has built a solid customer base. “We provide top-tier service, so our customer retention is very strong. Most of the customers we lose are businesses that shut down their operations. We can usually spot within days if a customer stops ordering due to competitor activity. We arrange a meeting, offer a counterquote, and retain the customer about 80-90% of the time,” shares Roberts. “More importantly, we quickly gain new customers. Last year, we grew by about 21%, and this year, we’re projecting around 12% growth. Much of our success with current customers is only possible because of the data we get from sales-i. It’s become so ingrained in our daily work as account managers that not having it would be like a construction worker missing a hammer or screwdriver.”

Country Fare Foodservice has recently relocated to a larger depot, enabling the team to significantly expand its reach to new regions and buying groups. “Having accurate data is essential for these expansions. When bidding for contracts, we need precise figures on historical sales and demand trends, and we’re sure sales-i will live up to the challenge,” wraps up Roberts.

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# Work smart. Sell smart.

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