

Case study

“Implementing the BRCGS Standard helped us develop our business into one with a stronger culture of food safety.”

Laura McCurdy, QA Manager, JM Swank



JM Swank

National distribution centres with strategically located regional warehouses.

The BRCGS Standard for Storage and Distribution

was introduced in 2006 to complete the chain between the food manufacturer and the retailer or caterer. It's designed to ensure that the quality and safety of products are maintained during their storage and distribution, and customer confidence is upheld. Today, it's an internationally recognised standard.

We spoke to Laura McCurdy, QA Manager at JM Swank, a leading food ingredient distributor in the US, about why they made the decision to become certificated and how they went about implementing the Standard.

Why did JM Swank choose to become certificated?

Our industry continues to evolve and challenge all of us, and we fully understand how critical it is for our customers to have complete confidence in our ability to uphold supply chain integrity. The certification and re-certification processes help promote continuous improvement across our supply chain.

What made JM Swank choose the BRC Global Standard for Storage and Distribution?

We chose the BRCGS Standard because it is widely recognised and trusted in the US and globally.

How did JM Swank select a certification body to work with?

Our corporate office had already selected a CB. They had a good experience working with them across our network of facilities throughout the country.

Did you undertake any training courses about the Standard before implementation? If so, did you find that useful?

Yes, we partnered with our corporate office for a training session on “How to Implement the BRCGS Standard” given by an Approved Training Provider (ATP). It enabled us to dive right in, assess our current state and understand how to move forward.

How many sites do you have, and where are they located?

We have 4 sites situated in North Liberty, Iowa; Carol Stream, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; and Denver, Colorado.

Are all your sites certificated, and would you consider BRCGS Standards certification for new sites?

Yes, all JM Swank distribution centres are certificated against the BRCGS Standard. As we expand our distribution network, we will continue to utilise it.

How did your implementation programme proceed?

Our food safety team drove the implementation. We quickly recognised it was important for us to break it down into smaller pieces so as not to get overwhelmed with the enormity of the task at hand. By setting goals and timelines for these smaller pieces, we were able to complete the

15 warehouses

Founded over 60 years

project piece by piece and keep up the momentum until full implementation was achieved.

This was a huge undertaking, especially since it was in addition to our other responsibilities and it required support from all areas of the business. In the end, it was a great example of teamwork and collaboration. Implementing the BRCGS Standard helped us develop our business into one with a stronger culture of food safety. We are very proud of our efforts and we all own a part of this success.

Has JM Swank made any major improvements to their site, structurally or related to equipment, that have been directly driven by compliance to the BRCGS, either to make compliance easier or to become compliant with any of the Standards' requirements?

We didn't make any major improvements in terms of equipment. We did make some structural changes which improved our site's security measures, as well as several changes and additions to our processes which made our overall quality system more robust.

One of the newer elements covers a site's IT system; does JM Swank secure and back up its computer system?

Yes.

How does JM Swank promote themselves?

JM Swank is a quality-driven food ingredient distributor. We promote ourselves through trade shows, a highly trained sales force and we also use our trucks as billboards. Our trusted dedication to service is reflected by the number of referrals we receive.

Have you ever approached BRCGS Standards directly to seek interpretation of the requirements or gain a better understanding?

Yes, I have requested assistance directly to gain a better understanding of some requirements in the Standard. My contact was very helpful and responsive.

When you receive your audit report and see what result the site has achieved, do you share site audit reports across your organisation, local press, customers or other sites?

Yes, we share the results across our organisation and with our customers.

Do you recommend that other companies implement the BRCGS Standard?

Yes, we would. The Storage and Distribution Standard encompasses all aspects of food safety and quality and specifically targets the supply chain.

Any tips for sites that are thinking about implementing the BRCGS Standard?

I would suggest that they start with BRCGS Standards training for employees from across the organisation. I prefer to teach in addition to training, meaning that employees understand the "why" behind the how. Only a portion of the Standard is implementation, the rest is maintenance; hence the importance of fostering a culture of food safety to ensure effectiveness of the programme going forward.

Do you have any pre-audit top tips?

Becoming certificated has helped us build a stronger culture of quality. With the culture comes everyone doing their part every day to support food safety and the requirements of the Standard. Therefore, we are audit-ready every day and don't require last minute preparation.

If you lack confidence about your audit readiness, consider using the self-assessment tool developed by BRCGS Standards or work with your certification body to be re-assessed.

About JM Swank

JM Swank is a quality-driven food ingredient distributor known for its high level of service. For over 60 years, they have provided food manufacturing customers with a broad range of high quality ingredients, in-depth industry knowledge, and service excellence. They combine national distribution centres with strategically located regional warehouses to provide flexible, customised logistics services. JRRW Transport, JM Swank's in-house contract carrier, operates temperature-controlled, satellite-equipped trucks throughout the continental United States. JM Swank has 240 employees and services and over 2,000 customers with more than 3,000 SKUs. They have warehouses in North Liberty, Iowa; Carol Stream, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; and Denver, Colorado.

To find out more, visit www.jmswank.com.

About BRCGS

BRCGS is a leading global brand and consumer protection organisation, and a provider of safety and quality standards programmes for food manufacture, packaging, storage and distribution, consumer products, agents and brokers and retail.

Our standards are generated with the help of technical specialists, retailers, manufacturers and certification bodies from around the world so everything is rooted in practicality, rigour and clarity. We also offer comprehensive support to help new and established businesses achieve their quality and safety aims.