

— CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

How Flowers Foods, Inc. Empowers Remote Audit Team & Stakeholder Collaboration

As VP of Internal Audit for Flowers Foods — one of the largest producers of packaged bakery foods in the United States — Paige Highsmith draws on her deep knowledge of the business to lead a team of three in-house auditors supplemented by 24 additional contract staff. “Most of my 25-year tenure with Flowers Foods has been within internal audit. Coming up through the organization and having exposure to different areas of the business made it a natural transition for me to oversee the internal audit activities and the control environment,” said Highsmith. Her extensive experience at Flowers Foods has helped the audit team take on a trusted advisor role: “We strive to build and maintain strong relationships with other departments across the company to help facilitate continuous-improvement efforts,” she added.

Despite success in positioning internal audit as a value-add partner to the business, Highsmith found that performance and reliability issues with her previous audit management tool were holding her team back — and actually pushing them to return to a manual environment of spreadsheets, emails, and shared drives. “Our previous audit system wasn’t user friendly and was challenging to use when working remotely,” said Highsmith. “The previous tool’s system functionality was so spotty and unreliable that it forced us to go back to word processing and spreadsheet software to manually track and manage the audits — which made updates labor-intensive and caused version-control issues.”

When an unstable environment leads to loss of documentation and time-consuming rework, it doesn’t just affect productivity — morale can suffer, too. “We frequently lost work when using our previous audit tool, which was frustrating and made it difficult to provide detailed updates on short notice. I had one particular workpaper that I lost three times! The fourth time I just

**PAIGE HIGHSMITH**VP, Internal Audit,
Flowers Foods, Inc.**Industry:** Packaged Food**Headquarters Location:** Thomasville, GA**Employees:** Approx. 9,700**Business Impact:** Facilitated distributed audit team collaboration; intuitive design improved business owner engagement; time and resource savings from testing, real-time visibility, and automation.**SOLUTIONS USED****Flowers Foods’ Audit Program: A Snapshot**

- Internal audit department with three in-house members supplemented by 24 additional contract staff at the second-largest company producer of fresh and frozen bakery products in the U.S. — known for brands such as Tastykake, Dave’s Killer Bread, Nature’s Own, and Wonder Bread.
- Responsible for an annual audit plan that covers 450 SOX and operational controls.
- Previous audit management solution was unreliable and not user friendly, forcing the team back to a manual environment — a move that resulted in version control issues, decentralized documentation, and time-consuming updates.

printed it off to prove that I had it and scanned it back in.” Realizing they couldn’t continue to operate with their then-current audit management tool, Highsmith and her team decided to explore alternatives that would empower her geographically dispersed team to collaborate more effectively.

SELECTING A RELIABLE & USER-FRIENDLY AUDIT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM

The Flowers Foods team knew they wanted an audit management platform that would be reliable and easy to use for team members and business stakeholders located throughout the U.S. “We needed a fresh approach. We were looking for a solution that would be easy to use, and that would help us manage our work more efficiently so we could be more productive and effective,” said Highsmith. “Because our previous solution was so unreliable, it was key for us to find a solution we could depend on, and that would give us visibility to the status of a project from the initial audit request all the way through to reporting.” After evaluating a number of potential solution providers, Flowers Foods selected AuditBoard for its real-time status updates, version control, workflow capability, and ability to integrate with control owners across the business.

During implementation, Flowers Foods found that AuditBoard’s user experience and dependability extends beyond the software to the onboarding and customer service teams as well. “I found the AuditBoard implementation team to be solutions-driven and responsive,” said Highsmith. “We were told the upload would be fairly straightforward, but having worked with other project teams in different capacities, I know it doesn’t always work that easily,” Highsmith shared. “It was a pleasant surprise to see the upload process as forthright as it was presented to us.”

The Flowers Foods audit team also appreciated AuditBoard’s flexibility, which enabled AuditBoard to set up the platform

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Flowers Foods Top 5 Time & Resource Savings Areas

Flowers Foods internal audit team has saved significant time and resources while using AuditBoard. Highsmith reports achieving significant efficiencies from:

1 Testing

“Improved management of and reduced time tracking test cycles, as well as the ability to quickly identify outstanding requests from business owners.”

2 Instant Status/Visibility

“Status updates that can be prepared on demand using the dashboards and control totals, eliminating hours stopping testing to get a status.”

3 Version Control

“Eliminating version control issues between documents, which means no more quality reviews to confirm accuracy of controls and results.”

4 Automating Certifications

“Automating quarterly questionnaires, which reduces the burden on control owners to manually print, obtain signatures, and summarize results.”

5 User Friendly

“Ease of use and ease of training new team members and business owners!”

to fit the Flowers Foods audit team’s preferred processes. “AuditBoard delivered a configurable solution with a quick and easy implementation, and we were able to use our existing formats to upload data into the system,” said Highsmith. “We didn’t have to reinvent our process, which was a big win for me.”

INTUITIVE PLATFORM FACILITATES COLLABORATION WITH CONTRACTORS AND BUSINESS OWNERS

Because Flowers Foods works with contract staff to round out its audit department, technology that is easy to learn and adopt

is a critical asset. “It’s important to get people up and running quickly in the onboarding process — staff and contractors as well as business owners,” said Highsmith. “AuditBoard has made it incredibly easy to bring people up to speed. We’re able to grant access very quickly, show them how to navigate the system, and they’re immediately ready to get started. We consider that a real positive given the outsource model we have.”

AuditBoard’s intuitive design makes it easy for control owners to access relevant details, understand what they own, and keep the process moving. “AuditBoard simplifies so many things not only for us, but for the business owners. We can easily connect with our business owners when we have a documentation request and track what we get back. It’s been an incredible feature to collaborate with them in the platform on control or process changes versus managing through back and forth email exchanges,” said Highsmith. “We’ve received very positive responses from business owners since implementing AuditBoard — and making the audit experience easier for them is a win in and of itself.”

EMPOWERING A REMOTE AND DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCE

In today’s environment of geographically dispersed teams and more people working from home, the ability to work from anywhere in a reliable environment is crucial. “My team is spread out all over the U.S., but with AuditBoard’s cloud-based platform we don’t have to be in the office or inside the network to access documentation,” said Highsmith. “AuditBoard makes it much easier to collaborate because we can see information in real time — from anywhere! The fact that we are not always wondering if a particular control has been reviewed has improved our workflow.”

EXPANDING EFFICIENCIES TO RISK MANAGEMENT

Compared with the dependability and performance issues Flowers Foods experienced with their previous audit management tool, AuditBoard has enabled Flowers Foods to take full control of their SOX and internal audit program. “The biggest challenges we solved with AuditBoard were overall audit management and our inability to access real-time information. We replaced an unreliable tool and labor-intensive, manual process with a solution that has improved version control for our control changes, workpaper reviews, and status updates.”

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The team at Flowers Foods has been so satisfied with AuditBoard’s SOX and Internal Audit modules that they are planning to implement RiskOversight, AuditBoard’s risk management module, to realize similar gains in their enterprise risk management program. “The biggest benefit we anticipate with RiskOversight is to stop relying on spreadsheets to monitor and track risks. It will be much more effective and secure to maintain all the risk information and documentation in one central platform. We’re also looking forward to saving time by eliminating the constant need to confirm the most recent version by giving users access to the most current status, rankings, and action plan details in one place,” said Highsmith.

By leveraging AuditBoard, Flowers Foods’s audit team is now positioned to gain greater efficiencies year over year as they manage their SOX controls, internal audits, and risk management using the platform. To learn how you can join hundreds of AuditBoard customers like Flowers Foods in saving time and increasing efficiency for your internal audit function, visit www.auditboard.com.

ABOUT FLOWERS FOODS

Headquartered in Thomasville, Ga., Flowers Foods, Inc. (NYSE: FLO) is one of the largest producers of packaged bakery foods in the United States with 2019 sales of \$4.2 billion. Flowers operates bakeries across the country that produce a wide range of bakery products. Among the company’s top brands are Nature’s Own, Wonder, Dave’s Killer Bread, Tastykake, and Canyon Bakehouse. Learn more at www.flowersfoods.com.



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