**Description of the company:**

Zuchtpilze Ruhhammer is an owner-managed company with two employees. The firm has specialized on providing all kinds of mushrooms and other seasonal groceries to local restaurants and pizzerias. Approximately 60% of the revenue is generated with white and oyster mushrooms, which are delivered twice a week to most of the 250 customers.

Seasonal groceries like asparagus, chanterelles and boletus account for the remaining sales. Those foods are only temporarily available and highly-priced. It is quite important to ensure at the beginning of the selling season that a customer is permanently satisfied. The goal is to have his commitment to frequently buy from Zuchtpilze Ruhhammer and no other competitor. Therefore, the first week of offering a new grocery is crucial.

**Description of the process:**

**Name:** Delivering new Seasonal Grocery Samples (to customers on a dedicated trip)

**Triggering Event:** Supplier informs company about new products

**Steps:**

* *Sending new product sample:* The company obtains a sample of the groceries from supplier and sends it to the customer.
* *Determining initial price:* The company determines the price of product.
* *Loading truck:* The company loads the new product samples in a truck and delivers it to its customers in one single trip.
* *Inquire Purchase Interest:*Customers provide initial feedback about the sample groceries and state whether they are interested or not in purchasing in the groceries.
* *Estimating demand:*Based upon the customer feedback, the company estimates the future demand for all customers that are served in a single trip.
* *Placing Orders:*An order including the aggregated demand for all customers is placed for the supplier.
* *Shipping Orders:* Once the order is ready, the supplier ships the required groceries to the company.
* *Distributing Orders:*An employee of the company loads the truck with the shipped groceries and delivers all orders to the customers in a single trip
* *Receiving order:* Customers receive their corresponding order. The process ends.

**Specific Result:** Newly arrived seasonal groceries are delivered to the customer.

**Current Problems with the Process:**

There are major issues with this process: Missing information and redundancy of work

Once we initially distributed the newly arrived product samples to all restaurants and pizzerias in a single trip[[1]](#footnote-1), it takes some days until we get in touch with the customer again. During this period, we have no clear information if the customer likes the product and how much he might order the next time. We have to estimate this amount for all customers on a trip based on the driver’s experience, which is very difficult and is prone to being wrong. However, it is crucial to completely satisfy the customer from the very beginning, because he otherwise might buy the product for the whole season from a competitor.

Additionally, handling all information like invoices, delivery notes or monthly bills causes an enormous amount of paperwork and time. After delivering our sample, the driver must inform every single customer about the product’s origin, pricing and quality and then try to inquire purchase interest. We have this problem in daily business as well. Any special requests or last-minute changes delay the process.

**How to Improve the Process:**

The process we described evolved in the course of time and fit perfectly for a smaller number of customers. The current issues can easily be resolved by using technology. An online platform or a mobile app for customers is the solution. Without a big effort, a chef can easily place orders, make changes or provide feedback. A central database at the company keeps track of everything. We do not have to guess the next week’s demand anymore. Simple reports provide a quick overview. For further use, we even can improve our route planning since we do not have to drive to all customers, but only to those who requested a service or products.

1. The company has six geographically different trips with a fixed number of customers on it. Each trip is served twice a week. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)