

Bringing Your Business Systems Up To Date

Modernizing your business processes with Microsoft Dynamics™ to drive business success

Microsoft recently researched the experience of nearly 200 companies with more than 250 PCs that have deployed one or more of the applications in the Microsoft Dynamics line of business management solutions. Among these companies, whose attitudes to technology tended to be more forward looking than usual, the most common issue was the need for modern systems. The pain points most often cited were manual processes that cause mistakes and inefficiencies, integration problems with other systems (both internal and external), lack of operational insight, and legacy software support and customization issues. This white paper explores the experience of these companies in more detail to help you understand how you can use Microsoft Dynamics to modernize your business processes and drive business success.

Introduction: Focusing on the Need for Modern Systems

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that help companies automate and streamline financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes to drive business success. The applications and services included are used by a wide variety of companies in many different industries, among them wholesale and retail, manufacturing, and services.

To better understand what drives the selection of Microsoft Dynamics among companies in so many different industries, we recently interviewed 95 business and technology decision-makers in organizations with more than 250 PCs that adopted Dynamics within the last three years. The interviews used a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions as the foundation for discussions that drilled down into specific needs, purchasing triggers, and pain points. From the results of those interviews we constructed an analytic framework that we applied to an additional 95 relevant case studies and deployment reports, giving us 190 data points about Microsoft Dynamics selection and deployment in a variety of industries.

What emerged from this research was four primary high-level business drivers for implementing a Dynamics-based application or solution:

- **Business Transformation:** the application is crucial for enabling a comprehensive and integrated platform to drive productivity, efficiency, and strategy
- **Work Load Optimization:** the application is needed for functional, department or area support, e.g., supply chain
- **Divisions and Branches:** the application is needed for consolidation of applications in branches, divisions and subsidiaries
- **Legacy Replacement:** the application is needed to replace legacy software that lacks support, needs extensive customization, or imposes excessive IT costs for other reasons

FIGURE 1 shows the actual breakdown of responses. (Legacy replacement was not a choice on the original survey question, but was written in by over 80% of those who initially chose “Other.”)

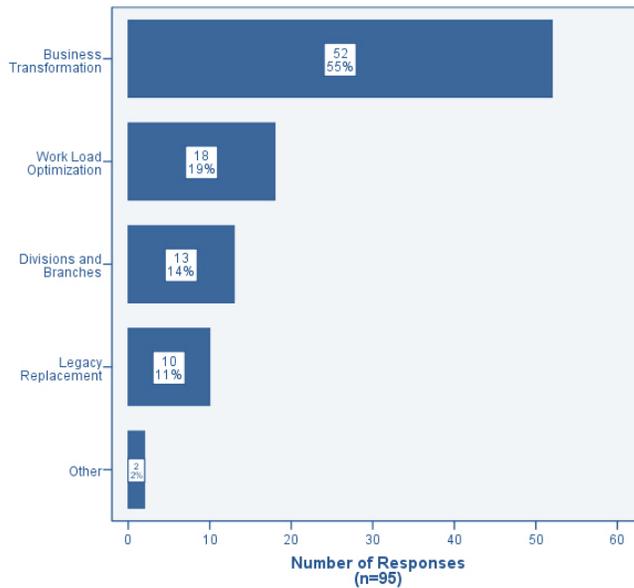


FIGURE 1 : BUSINESS NEEDS DRIVING DYNAMICS IMPLEMENTATION

Drilling down further, both in the interviews and in the analysis of case studies and deployment reports, revealed more than a dozen factors that led companies to consider, select, and implement a Microsoft Dynamics solution:

- The need for modern systems
- Rapid internal growth
- Growth via mergers and acquisitions (M&A)
- Better Financial Management
- Better Business Analysis
- Better CRM
- TCO
- Centralized Operations
- Change in Business Models
- Compliance—Government Regulations
- Global functionality
- Single functional need across multiple divisions/branches
- Web as an integral part of the business

This white paper focuses on the third of these, growth via mergers and acquisitions, and is intended to help you understand how Microsoft Dynamics enables companies like yours to upgrade their financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes to meet the challenges they face.

After a brief review of the interview demographics, this white paper reviews the top four pain points associated with the need for modern systems, and how Microsoft Dynamics addressed them for the companies involved. The white paper concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Demographics: Forward-Looking “Big IT” Companies

As noted above, the data collected from the 95 recent-adoption interviews were used to construct an analytic framework that could be applied to already-existing case studies and deployment reports. The resulting synthesis represents a detailed picture of the reasons why “Big IT” companies—those with 250 or more PCs—consider, select, and deploy Microsoft Dynamics, and in particular, the pain points that Dynamics addresses for them.

Participation in the interviews was limited to companies with 250 or more PCs or notebooks in the organization. 32% of the respondents work for organizations with more than 1,000 PCs. Figure 2 shows the breakdown.

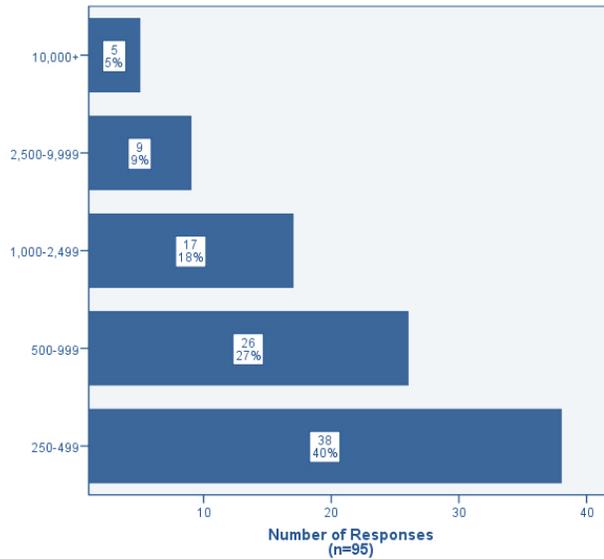


FIGURE 2: INTERVIEWED COMPANIES BY SIZE (NUMBER OF PCs)

Of these companies, 26% were in services, 21% in manufacturing, 17% in retail and wholesale distribution, and the balance in a wide variety of industries (FIGURE 3).

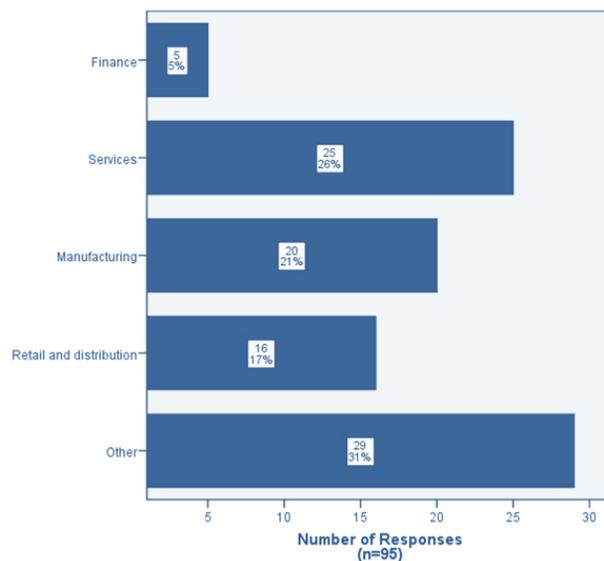


FIGURE 3: INTERVIEWED COMPANIES BY INDUSTRY

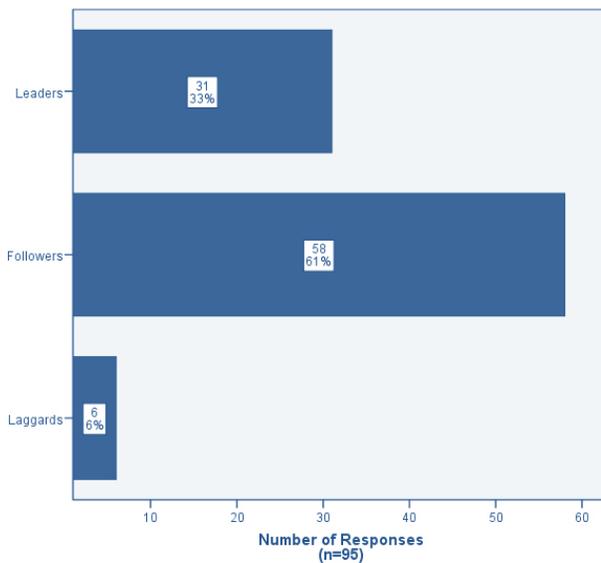
Of the 95 business and technology decision-makers interviewed, 60% make either the final technical decision or the final technical recommendation, and 58% make either the final business decision or the final business recommendation. At the companies surveyed, the leading participant groups in the technical decision are operations infrastructure or an internal applications group, while the leading participant groups in the business decision are a user within a line of business (LOB), an executive team CEO/CIO, or operations infrastructure.

A particularly interesting outcome of the interviews was how respondents describe their company's place in the technology adoption lifecycle, which reveals Microsoft Dynamics customers to be more forward-looking than usual. Respondents were asked to choose which of three statements best describes their company's technology style:

- **Leader:** technology-driven, using technology to gain a competitive advantage (early adopter)
- **Follower:** adopts technology when it is proven to be beneficial
- **Laggard:** technology risk-averse and sensitive to price

As

FIGURE 4 shows, only 6% chose the "laggard" category, compared to the 15-20% that would be expected in a typical



sample of similar companies.

FIGURE 4: INTERVIEWED COMPANY PLACE IN TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION CYCLE

The Pain of Needing Modern Systems

The need for modern systems is the most common issue among Dynamics customers. Systems that haven't kept up with changing business demands impose increasing operational inefficiencies that can severely impact a company's bottom line. The specific situations that lead to a recognition of the need for modern systems are as varied as the companies involved, but our research reveals that they can generally be categorized under one of four closely-related primary pain points:

- Manual processes that cause mistakes and inefficiencies
- Integration problems with other systems, both internal and external
- Lack of operational insight
- Legacy software support and customization issues

As we shall see, these pain points are not independent of each other. For instance, manual processes are often necessary because legacy systems aren't well integrated, resulting in lack of operational insight. If you're facing one of these pains, the chances are that you're suffering to some degree with one or more of the others.

Manual Processes

In many companies, IT systems and the business processes they support exist as “islands of automation” whose only linkage is through manual data entry by employees. This situation can be the result of independent IT initiatives undertaken by various business units without central coordination, solving what may be a quite pressing problem without reference to other parts of the business, or it can come about as a result of incremental application of information technology to specific business needs. However it arises, this dependence on what might be called “manual application integration” is a source of costly mistakes and general inefficiency, both of which act as brakes on a company’s ability to adapt to changing business conditions.

Manual Processes

INTERVIEW COMMENTS

Reasons for replacing the previous solution or application

“The data was static and not really shareable.”
Application Systems Manager, marine engineering college

“We needed ways to transfer the data among our systems.” *Accounts Analyst, Outsourced Technical Support Call Center*

“It was tedious to generate reports, sometimes taking up to a week.” *Manager, Sales Administration Systems, oil field equipment manufacturer*

“It took three separate systems to enter the same data.” *Project Manager, food service software developer*

“The system was homegrown and had no transaction balances, so it required manual transfers.” *IT Manager, Contact Center Applications and Service Desk, telecommunications service provider*

“Our users had to change their practices to work with the system, and report generation took too long.” *Vice President, IT, personal and sport optics manufacturer*

Consider the case of Canadian General-Tower (CGT), which manufactures vinyl auto interior parts. The privately held company, with about 1,000 employees, supplies parts for 85 percent of cars and light trucks sold in North America. The company’s manufacturing facilities

are state of the art, but the company managed its supply chain with several disconnected systems that required costly, time-consuming data entry. When a shipment left the warehouse, a worker faxed the bill of lading to the main office, where another employee typed it into the accounts receivable system and created an invoice.

“We have 24 truckloads leaving our plant every day, and each truckload carries multiple shipments. We used to have one person spend their entire day taking paper records and typing up the entries into the system,” says Tim Armstrong, Vice President Corporate Systems at CGT. There were similar disconnects throughout the company systems, including accounting and purchasing. “With multiple manual steps and no overall view of company operations, closing the books on operations took more than five days,” says John Ropell, formerly the company’s Controller and now Director of Continuous Improvement at CGT. “You’d start work on a new month without even knowing whether you made money last month or not.”

Based on his familiarity with enterprise resource planning systems from other vendors and his deep background in the automotive industry, Armstrong recommended a Microsoft® solution. His cost justifications for top management showed that Microsoft Dynamics AX would pay for itself in reduced maintenance costs and improved operations within three to nine months.

Deploying Microsoft Dynamics AX for its general ledger, accounts payable, and both commodity and materials requisition ordering purchasing brought CGT’s supply chain management and other business processes out of the dark age of the company’s 80s-era systems. The results were dramatic, even before the full implementation the company planned, with notable improvements in supply chain productivity. For instance, the person responsible for typing shipment records into the system has been reassigned to higher value tasks. The implementation has also improved purchasing and supplier management.

“We’re still implementing Microsoft Dynamics AX, and it’s already transforming our business. We couldn’t be happier with our new system,” says Armstrong. He estimates that the eventual cost savings will total CDN\$850,000. The purchasing department is particularly happy. “I’ve personally saved an hour or two a day ever since the new system has been up and running,” says Joan Hanrahan, Corporate Senior Buyer. “I used to have to reconcile 5 to 10 invoices a day with price discrepancies. In the old system, we had to back out the receipts, change the price, and re-enter the receipt. That was a big chunk of my day.”

Benefit Cosmetics, a subsidiary of French-owned Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy that is a world leader in beauty products, was also struggling with the costs imposed by manual sales processes, and found that Microsoft Dynamics AX could help. Selling wholesale beauty products to leading department stores comes with strict packaging, labeling, and shipping requirements—and failure to comply with them can result in costly penalties. “Our processes involved a lot of manual work—people running around with bits of paper. We were receiving a large amount of charge-backs, where money was actually deducted from our invoice, for not meeting the retailers’ requirements,” says Osh O’Crowley, the Vice President of Information Technology at Benefit Cosmetics. “But Microsoft Dynamics AX facilitated a systematic approach to shipping, something our trading partners greatly appreciated. The number of charge-backs we’re receiving is reduced by 80% and our retailers are much happier doing business with us.”

Integration Problems

Many companies are dependent on legacy systems that are exactly right for a given division, department, or function, and so are in no need of replacement. But such systems are rarely designed with an eye to integrating with other systems, so it is hard to get a unified view of the information they manage. This inability to exchange data can also make it difficult to deliver needed information to business partners in a streamlined fashion. In both cases, the specter of manual data-entry inefficiency again rears its head.

Integration Problems

INTERVIEW COMMENTS

Reasons for replacing the previous solution or application

“We wanted a product that would integrate with an important third-party application, as well as with our other Microsoft applications.” *CFO, software consulting company*

“We needed to be able to integrate student information into other applications.” *Application Systems Manager, marine engineering college*

“Our existing systems were old technology and none of them interoperated.” *Senior MTS Project Manager, retail grocery chain*

“We had a series of disjointed systems tied together with custom programming, and it wasn’t agile enough.” *Director of IT, industrial automation consulting company*

“Integration was a mess.” *IT Division Manager, non-profit charitable organization*

“We wanted to gain efficiencies by integrating with other Microsoft products.” *Director of Finance, non-profit human services organization*

Polaris Industries is one of the world’s largest manufacturers of all-terrain vehicles and the recognized leader in the snowmobile industry. Within the company, five separate organizations provide support to consumers, internal sales staff, and dealers, and each maintained its own systems, which resulted in a collection of disparate call-logging systems that did not share information, resulting in poor communication between groups, ineffective customer service and support, and redundant support efforts.

Support representatives desperately wanted a single, consolidated view of all calls related to a specific dealer or vehicle, but none of the disparate systems could deliver this. However, these support groups also rely on multiple legacy applications, each of which delivers critical functionality, such as Order Status, Bill of Materials Schematics, and a Component Parts List. The company could not afford to consider a solution that would not integrate with these systems.

Polaris found what it needed with Microsoft Dynamics CRM, which not only integrates data from the company’s disparate legacy systems, but supplies superior customer support capabilities that are easy to learn and use. According to Neil Quade, Consumer Service and Warranty Supervisor, “With just twenty minutes of training, employees know how to use Microsoft Dynamics CRM, including navigation to Polaris legacy applications.” And Microsoft Dynamics CRM integrates easily with the desktop productivity applications employees are already familiar with, including Microsoft Office Word, Excel®, and Outlook®.

Now it’s easy for support representatives to view dealer issues in a number of different ways, providing quick access to issue-related information and enabling timely resolution. “With the links provided in Microsoft CRM, I can research a dealer’s issue more quickly and gain greater insight to deliver a higher level of service, says Bob Vonvett, technical service representative at Polaris.

A dealer self-service site is also currently in development to improve communications with the company's more than 1600 independent dealers. Through Polaris' existing dealer extranet, dealers will submit support issues to Polaris staff using customized Microsoft CRM forms. The form will be completed and submitted online, a support representative will answer the query, and the response will be posted for the dealer's review.

Choice Hotels International, which franchises more than 5,000 hotels, inns, all-suite hotels, and resorts in more than 40 countries, encountered similar difficulties in its more than 3,700 North American properties, where front-office reservations systems were not integrated with back-office accounting systems. One effect of this was to make it very difficult to gather the information about spending patterns and return visits that franchisees needed to build customer loyalty programs. After extensive research, the company chose to endorse a vertical-specific ERP Hospitality system as the hotel management system recommended to franchisees.

The ERP system is integrated with Microsoft CRM (now Microsoft Dynamics CRM), which offered a strategic operating platform that is simple to use but flexible enough to support growth. The integration capabilities of Microsoft CRM give hotel property managers the ability to electronically transfer data from the front-office system to Microsoft CRM for use in follow-up surveys, marketing campaigns, and customer loyalty programs. In the pilot test about 70 percent of the business guests returned on a monthly basis. Properties can use this data to increase the individual spend rate from each visit and capitalize on a frequent visitor program.

Lack of Operational Insight

Perhaps the worst effect of the fragmentation of information imposed by poor integration and the resulting dependence on manual data entry is a lack of operational insight. The information needed to make good business decisions is there, but there's no practical or timely way to access it. This can be particularly critical where compliance issues are concerned.

Lack of Operational Insight

INTERVIEW COMMENTS

Reasons for replacing the previous solution or application

"We didn't have the visibility we needed, because it couldn't support both sales and the call center. There was no way to track reports." *Director of Sales Operations, high-technology marketing software developer*

"We needed to improve our sales reporting ability." *Project Manager, food service software developer*

"Consolidating data was important for dealing with government compliance requirements." *Controller/Chief Accounting Officer, semiconductor test equipment manufacturer*

"We wanted increased control over our process flow and capabilities." *Internet Development Director, car dealership*

"It needed to be easier to access data about account status to ensure we were following through." *Manager, Applications, major paper company*

For instance, at H-E-B Grocery Company, one of the largest independent grocery chains in the nation, one of the cornerstones of the company's success has been the popularity of its more than 3,000 H-E-B "Own Brand" private-label products. These are produced at eleven manufacturing plants, among them an ice cream plant, a tortilla plant, and three industrial bakeries.

Each plant was using a legacy Cimpro software system to report vital inventory and financial information to headquarters, but only on an extremely basic level. Local managers assessed inventory levels monthly and manually compiled financial reports. Few automated reports were available. As a result, some H-E-B plants had a vast excess of ingredients in storage, while others would run out of critical materials without warning, necessitating emergency replacement.

In addition, many of the material handling processes at both stores and plants were manual in nature. "Our employees would receive goods and mark up the correct paperwork, but it could take at least a week—and sometimes even a month—for the shipment to be entered into the computer," says Bob McCullough, Group Vice President of Manufacturing at H-E-B. This lack of insight into warehouse stocks slowed turnaround, which impacted the freshness of products, an important factor in the retail grocery industry.

The company thoroughly evaluated several high-profile solutions and chose Microsoft Dynamics AX because its flexibility would enable them to improve efficiency and standardize processes across all of the company's manufacturing facilities. H-E-B extended Microsoft Dynamics AX with the food industry-specific extension, Junction F/B, which enhances its functionality by adding capabilities for the food industry, enabling manufacturers to accommodate complex variables such as seasonal supply, fluctuating market demand, and variable ingredient qualities. The company also installed touch-screen monitors and bar code readers throughout H-E-B facilities, which enable employees to immediately locate purchase orders (POs) and process the receipts when a shipment arrives. This technology also allows workers to start work orders to use ingredients, ship finished goods, and invoice the receiving warehouse using processes that are paperless, fast, and accurate.

"This is a huge improvement over what we used to do," says McCullough. "Now, we're actually operating in real time." And the new system has eliminated the occasional errors of the previous manual process. "Now we receive directly against the PO. Before, we just took receipt based on the shipment information provided by the vendors. We were getting double shipments and over-shipments—both of which we eliminated with Microsoft Dynamics AX."

The resulting improvement of insight into inventory and scheduling enables H-E-B warehouses to ship products more efficiently to the stores and has doubled product turnaround in H-E-B warehouses. The faster inventory rotation is also apparent with baked goods and other H-E-B private-label products. For example, by leveraging efficiencies gained through Microsoft Dynamics AX, on-hand inventory in the company's ice cream plant has been reduced by over fifty percent. "We've passed along improved freshness to our customers, says McCullough. "And, in the grocery business, freshness makes a huge impact on taste and customer satisfaction."

Eureka Lighting, a fast-growing supplier of designer light fixtures to architects and interior design firms, also experienced the pains imposed by a lack of operational insight. "Our true value lies in delivering quality and attractive products to customers as quickly as possible. Because we specialize in made-to-order products and can literally sell whatever a customer wants us to make for them, we need to be flexible, innovative, and have an ability to deliver quickly," says Patrick Foley, Vice President of Operations, Eureka Lighting. The company offers literally millions of possible product combinations, but without a reliable ERP system, Eureka couldn't track inventory accurately. Orders were taking longer to fulfill, and customer delivery times became less predictable. Inventory was steadily growing, with some of it becoming

obsolete in the warehouse. There was no clear picture of order numbers or status.

After considering a range of options, the company chose Microsoft Dynamics AX, largely on account of its flexibility. "We were impressed by how easy it was to customize Microsoft Dynamics AX," says Foley. "ERP is a major investment and a very serious decision for a company like ours. We needed to make sure the solution we chose worked exactly the way we wanted. Using Microsoft Dynamics AX, we can leverage the market expertise we've built over 15 years and make it flexible and responsive to our needs."

Since implementing Microsoft Dynamics AX, Eureka has been able to cut its inventory load and reduce customer delivery times. Employees are able to view up-to-date stock and order information and make adjustments based on real-time information, not on calculated guesses. This has led to much faster order fulfillment times. With the clear view of inventory that Microsoft Dynamics AX helps to provide, Eureka has also been able to shave nearly CDN\$2 million in inventory costs since the solution went live, including permanently ridding itself of CDN\$800,000 in obsolete parts. The company has also been able to reduce its staff time spent on administration tasks such as hunting for inventory and tracking orders by 20 percent. "[Microsoft] Dynamics AX has helped to make our organization much more efficient, and that saves us time and money. We've been able to focus more attention on growing our company and helping our customers," says Foley

Legacy Software

Virtually every company has legacy software, and sometimes it still has the functionality needed for a given division or set of processes. But even if this is the case, there are usually support, customization, or integration problems involved. The software may have reached end of life, or the company that made it acquired by another firm that already had a product with similar functionality. In both cases, support may become unavailable or too expensive; and sometimes, there are very few employees left who know how effectively use the software. Or, given that legacy software is likely to have been written in a language that fewer and fewer programmers are familiar with, or is poorly documented, the customization needed to keep up with business demands may be impractically expensive. And, as noted above, integration with other systems, internal or external, can be a particular problem with legacy software.

Legacy Software

INTERVIEW COMMENTS

Reasons for replacing the previous solution or application

“Our solution was state of the art...in 1985. We needed something that was going to be around for a while, and our programmer was getting old.”
Department Manager, major political organization

“Our solution didn’t have a appropriate upgrade path.” *Infrastructure Manager, outsourced infrastructure and application services firm*

“Our previous software was incomplete, and now unsupported.” *Vice President, Information Technology, food service supplier*

“We were running on VAX VMS and needed to install a new system that could be maintained.” *Project Manager, manufacturing firm*

“The annual maintenance cost was too high.”
Controller, holding company with 60 businesses

Domfoam International is one of Canada’s leading manufacturers and wholesalers of sponge and polyurethane foam, with a 260,000-square-foot plant in Montreal, Canada. The company was using a Macola enterprise resource planning (ERP) system with a Betrieve database to manage its accounting processes and 19 customized Delphi applications to help manage its manufacturing and wholesaling processes. But this system fell short of the company’s specialized needs. It could not track production units—the only meaningful units of measure for the foam industry. Sales reports needed someone to manually run a Delphi process that would write to a separate file, which would then require sorting into various foam subcomponents using one of many front-end applications. And the process was so cumbersome that only one employee in the company had the database knowledge and skills to produce reports.

In addition, there were reliability issues with the system, and support for the applications in the Canadian market segment was becoming increasingly difficult to find. With quick order turnaround in the custom foam industry, any system downtime risked not meeting customer demands. “We make the foam, cut the foam to customer specifications, and then ship it the next day,” says Jim Maisonneuve, company controller. “And, when we can’t process an order because the system is down, that puts us at risk.”

The company considered upgrading its solution, but with 19 front-end systems to recompile and lack of support for the Macola and Betrieve products, Domfoam knew it needed a more viable solution. “It was clear that we needed a Microsoft® product. Microsoft has the resources to support its customers, and we knew we’d have the support we needed far into the future—unlike our other solution,” Maisonneuve says.

DomFoam chose Microsoft Business Solutions-Navision (now Dynamics NAV) and Microsoft SQL Server 2000. With General Ledger, Payables and Receivables, Purchases and Payable, Inventory, and Shipping and Receiving modules, the new solution gives Domfoam all of the consolidated production information with useful units of measure the company needs.

The customization capabilities of Microsoft Dynamics NAV enabled the company add complex cost and price calculation rules associated with cutting and customizing foam products for each of its customers. Using this solution, Domfoam eliminated 17 of its 19 legacy applications right away, resulting in a 90% productivity gain when running reports. “Before, employees would sit there and watch things go in circles before the system would respond,” explains Maisonneuve. “Now, they have the information they need within seconds and can work seamlessly without system delays.”

The hundreds of customizable rules supplied with Microsoft Dynamics NAV also made it possible for employees to run their own reports, rather than relying on the one person who could coax needed information out of the legacy systems. “That’s the power of Microsoft Navision,” Maisonneuve explains. “It has extended information throughout our organization to the people who need it and has empowered employees to complete these tasks themselves.”

Petro-Canada, one of Canada’s largest oil and gas companies, was struggling with a decade-old inventory and financial system locally installed throughout its chain of 700 retail franchise locations. The legacy system was based on a mix of custom and packaged software—some of which was no longer supported—and couldn’t support the changing needs of company associates, nor support new business and marketing strategies. In addition, Petro-Canada also faced growing system maintenance costs and lengthy upgrade times. The legacy applications were locally installed on desktop computers at each of the 700 gas stations, which often meant a technician had to be dispatched to each site to manually install upgrades. At an average cost of CDN\$200 per site visit, a single upgrade across Petro Canada’s 700 franchise locations could cost upwards of \$140,000 and often took months to complete.

The company considered four applications and providers. “When we looked at what was available in the market, Microsoft Dynamics AX was the only solution that met the majority of our needs out of the box,” says Ken McLaughlin, Manager, Retail Systems and Support, Petro-Canada. “It met 75 to 80 per cent of our requirements right away. The scalability and customization options available through Microsoft Dynamics AX were a key selling point.”

The company chose to centralize their retail franchise operations using Microsoft Dynamics AX with a web-based interface, thus eliminating separate applications at each site. Not only is the new system far easier to use, cutting down on training time for franchise employees, and far more effective in tracking inventory and financial information, but system upgrades are now completed in a fraction of the time. Upgrades can be installed in one place and functionality pushed out to all of the retail locations simultaneously instead of in phases. It’s no longer necessary to send technicians to each site for a manual installation or upgrade. “The long rollout process for our system maintenance and upgrades has been completely eliminated,” says Ken McLaughlin, Manager, Retail Systems and Support at Petro-Canada. “Using the centralized Microsoft Dynamics AX environment, we can have an upgrade completed within a two-hour window. This is a big improvement over our previous timeframe of approximately four months.”

Summary

Microsoft Dynamics gives organizations the ability to modernize their financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes to meet the challenges they face today. The wide range of capabilities offered by the applications in the Microsoft Dynamics line give you the tools to overcome many of the problems caused by outdated systems.

Your present solution may be dependent on manual processes that cause mistakes and operational inefficiencies, dragging down your productivity and raising costs. Microsoft Dynamics, by giving you the ability to automate the coordination and communication between multiple business units, or with customers and partners, can greatly increase productivity and reduce costly errors, increasing both employee and customer satisfaction.

Or perhaps your current system doesn't integrate well with other systems, whether your own or those of business partners. Microsoft Dynamics is designed to integrate easily with a wide range of other solutions to give you a unified view of the information you need to manage your business. You can also link your partners into your processes more easily, to streamline everything from sales to support. And, of course, the familiar Windows user interface and natural integration with critical productivity applications like Outlook will give your users a big boost.

One of the biggest benefits of the integration and automation that Microsoft Dynamics can deliver is unlocking the business data you already possess but can't access in a timely or practical fashion. With Microsoft Dynamics, the information you need to understand business trends and respond to competitive challenges is at your fingertips. Hundreds of customized reports make up-to-date business data easily available to users—no more complex reporting processes that only experts can use.

And you can leave behind those legacy systems that may have been state of the art twenty years ago but now represent costly customization, support, and integration issues. Microsoft's enterprise commitment, and the extensive network of partners with expertise in virtually every industry, mean that your Microsoft Dynamics solution can be cost-effectively customized to meet your needs, will be supported going forward, and can be integrated as needed with any legacy systems that are still critical to your business.