Fusion Alliance

CASE STUDY: DYNAMICS AX IN THE CLOUD RESHAPES AFFINITY

While Microsoft has evolved its Dynamics AX ERP into Dynamics 365, a modular cloud version that adapts and grows with businesses, a broad base of businesses still run Dynamics AX 2012 on-premises.

Fusion Alliance continues to support these previous Dynamics versions, while offering expertise in Dynamics 365's SaaS (software as a service) offering.

Overview

Affinity Apparel, a leader in the uniform-manufacturing industry, engaged a third party to implement the Microsoft Dynamics AX ERP and e-commerce in the cloud. This was at a time when there was no Dynamics version in the cloud, and Affinity had a 2012 Dynamics AX implementation.

But issues during implementation resulted in sluggish technology and a system that crashed multiple times daily. For Affinity, the deployment was teetering on the verge of project failure. The company needed help from experts, and quickly.

Market Reality

Affinity's story dates back over a century, with success measured by creating quality apparel, providing strong customer experiences and shipping orders rapidly.

Affinity wanted to reinforce its leadership role by implementing Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 and e-commerce in the Microsoft Cloud.

By efficiently running operations, finance, customer service and sales on one platform, Affinity sought to deliver seamless customer interactions, boost productivity, create flexibility for growth and generate business intelligence to drive performance. When that didn't happen, Affinity enlisted Fusion's help.

Business Opportunity

Affinity reported that its systems became almost unusable soon after the ERP deployment (before Fusion came on board).

Warehouse workers trying to access an order or print an invoice waited 30 seconds to minutes for a response.

Objectives
- *Analyze Microsoft Azure and Dynamics AX configuration*
- *Speed up system processing and ensure system reliability*
- *Reduce costs and restore efficient processing of orders*

Approach
- *Re-architect and implement entire infrastructure in new Azure datacenter*
- *Migrate operations and ensure interoperability of devices*
- *Configure Dynamics AX to conform to best practices*
- *Identify and remediate inefficiencies*

Business Impact
- *Increased units shipped* *from 3,000/day in Month 1 to 7,500/day currently*
- *Reduced AX downtime* *from 2.5 hours per day to 75 days without any AX-related system outages*
- *Increased units per container* *from 1.4 to 3.5, restoring freight revenue to pre-implementation levels*
- *Restored customer confidence through seamless, engaging experience*
- *Created* *scalable system with flexibility for growth*

Keys to Success
- *Affinity's trust in Fusion's expertise increased agility of project*
- *Quick decision making and turnaround throughout implementation*
- *Fusion's development background and adherence to best practices led to sound guidance*

Website orders couldn't be processed efficiently, if at all, for fulfillment once the transaction entered Dynamics AX.

Other key issues involving purchase orders, invoicing and warehouse functionality were inhibiting Affinity's lifecycle of cash.

Affinity's Solution
Fusion partnered with Affinity to perform a technology rescue to stabilize the environment. After an assessment, Fusion immediately repaired critical architecture, increased capacities and improved inefficient custom code.

Fusion performed additional fixes and process improvements, including migrating Affinity's entire Dynamics AX ERP system from one Microsoft datacenter to another. This transition improved database performance instantly and ensured the interoperability of devices in Affinity's warehouses and fulfillment centers.

Fusion re-architected and configured the new environment to adhere to Microsoft best practices for Dynamics AX deployments. Customizations in the original implementation that caused over $1 million in orders to be hung up in the system were discovered and fixed.

Fusion also removed thousands of dollars of unneeded costs that were generated by misconfigured transportation management.

The impact was tremendous. System performance improved by a factor of 10. Batch processes previously taking 40+ hours were reduced to 10 hours or less. Other performance factors within the cloud-based, end-user software increased individual productivity exponentially.

With Affinity back in the black, Fusion continues to be a trusted partner and advisor, driving further innovations and efficiencies, particularly in the Warehouse Management System and

through customized websites deployed for Affinity's e-commerce platforms.

"With Fusion as a trusted partner for our implementation, we have been able to stabilize our IT architecture, optimize our AX warehouse module and enhance our website capabilities to move from an extended implementation to growing our business. Fusion's talent pool has broad expertise with all modules of Dynamics AX, cloud infrastructure architecture, application development and excellent support framework – all key contributors to turning a distressed implementation into a stable business platform. Fusion is a reliable, responsive and effective company that we are looking forward to partnering with long term," said Steven Belongia, Affinity CIO at the time.

Update
In 2018, Affinity Apparel continues to utilize Fusion Alliance for process improvements in warehouse and transportation management.

Relevant Takeaways
- Seemingly insurmountable problems *can* be overcome. Affinity was able to conquer what seemed like impossible challenges and return attention to its core business.

- **Microsoft Dynamics in the cloud** is a powerful tool that **must be implemented according to Microsoft best practices and recommendations.**

- While this project highlights work with the Dynamics AX 2012 on-premises version, Fusion also supports and provides expertise in Microsoft's current Dynamics 365 SaaS offering.

- Affinity leveraged Fusion's development and cloud background to gain technology insights that the firm it previously worked with couldn't deliver. Fusion took time to partner with and learn Affinity's

business objectives in order to ensure a solution that would align with Affinity's vision.

ABOUT AFFINITY APPAREL
Affinity Apparel specializes in designing and embroidering uniforms for the employees of hundreds of companies, including airlines, fast-food chains, gas stations and pharmacies. Each day more than 400,000 people go to work wearing Affinity-made apparel. The company's roots go back to the late 1800s in Dayton, Ohio and Moultrie, Georgia.

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About Fusion
Fusion Alliance delivers actionable insights, customer experiences and human-driven technologies that transform the way our clients envision and shape their businesses.

That's why businesses across multiple industries have relied on Fusion's expertise and partnership for over 25 years. Fusion Alliance is the catalyst that moves your ideas to execution.

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