Discovering Microsoft Dynamics 365 for the Manufacturing Industry

Enhance-Optimize-Scale

An integrated tech footprint translates to streamlined operations, powerful data reporting, and scalability.

For manufacturing enterprises, maintaining and providing a steady supply chain with rapid, accurate forecasting, pinpoint shopfloor planning, and reliable asset management is a must. In today's capricious marketplace, it's also of the utmost importance to equip your business with powerful tools to enhance workers' performance and streamline your operations to keep up with the swift changes and current demands. The last thing businesses, managers, and workers want to worry about is whether or not their technology is working *for* them. An ERP platform that offers broad, deep functionality that can handle complex operations with streamlined efficiency is critical to scale. Implementing a powerful ERP system is the pathway to positioning your business to capitalize on growth opportunities and scale.

Deepening its commitment to 'more personal computing,' Microsoft Dynamics 365 offers an ERP platform that enables manufacturers to meet their current business needs and seize opportunities to grow. Dynamics 365 is unique among competitors as it offers a business platform with broad, deep functionality that can be configured to meet the unique needs of your business. This attribute makes it the ideal choice among manufacturers where data and information of cost models and available-to-promise calculations can be turned into monetary value. Companies that choose D365 as their ERP platform gain access to that data, freeing up siloed information between their business segments. Workers experience real-time data reports, collected within minutes instead of days; by integrating shop floor and asset management modules, manufacturing enterprises can increase productivity by eliminating downtime inefficiencies from missed scheduling opportunities or missed machine maintenance. Additionally, the increased visibility of integrating shopfloor operations gives businesses highly detailed costing models. Integrate your finance and operations with D365 and turn the power of rapid data, visibility, and business tools into real value.

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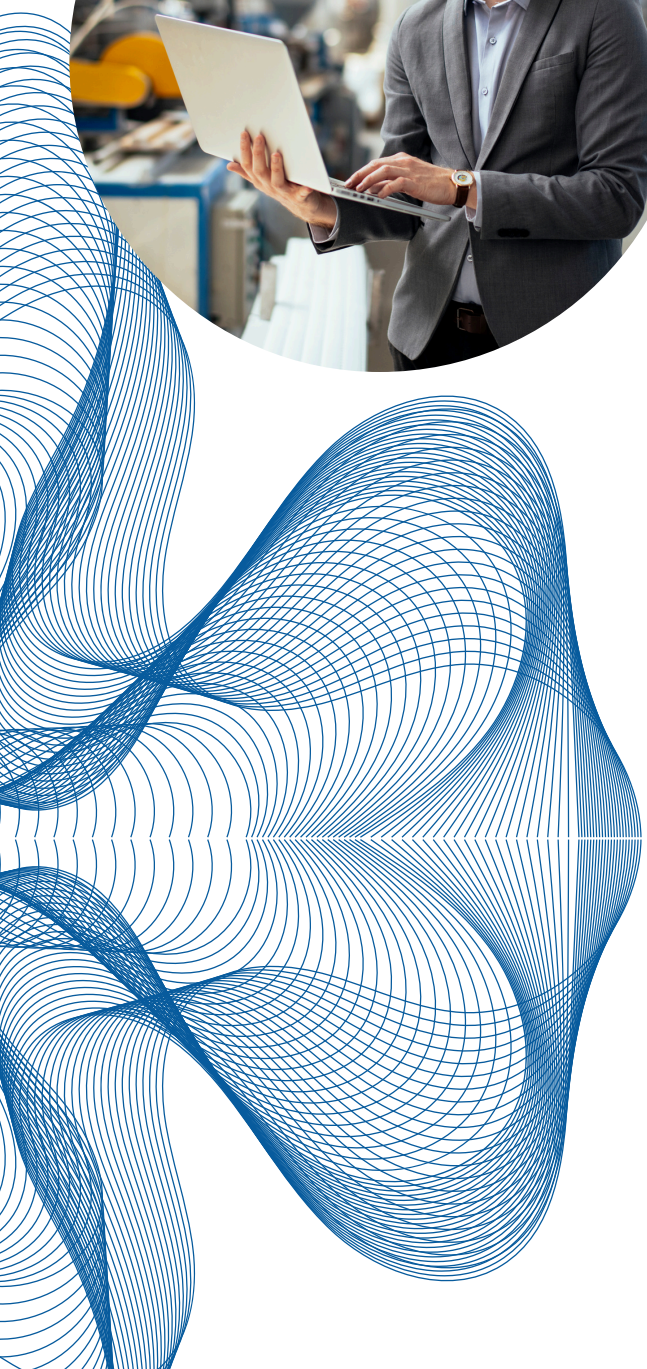
Tools to leverage growth and maximize efficiency

The Microsoft Stack is the powerful platform that enables your business to experience high-visibility over your entire supply chain, warehouse and manufacturing operations, and finance. Utilizing this powerful tool enterprises can communicate real-time information across your organization and between software tools while simultaneously delivering consistency for customers and workers.

After implementing the Microsoft Stack, executives can make strategic, data-driven decisions using rapid reporting, and discovering value in their operations. Plus, employees can focus on insights and strategic functionality enabling growth, enhanced operations, and scalability.
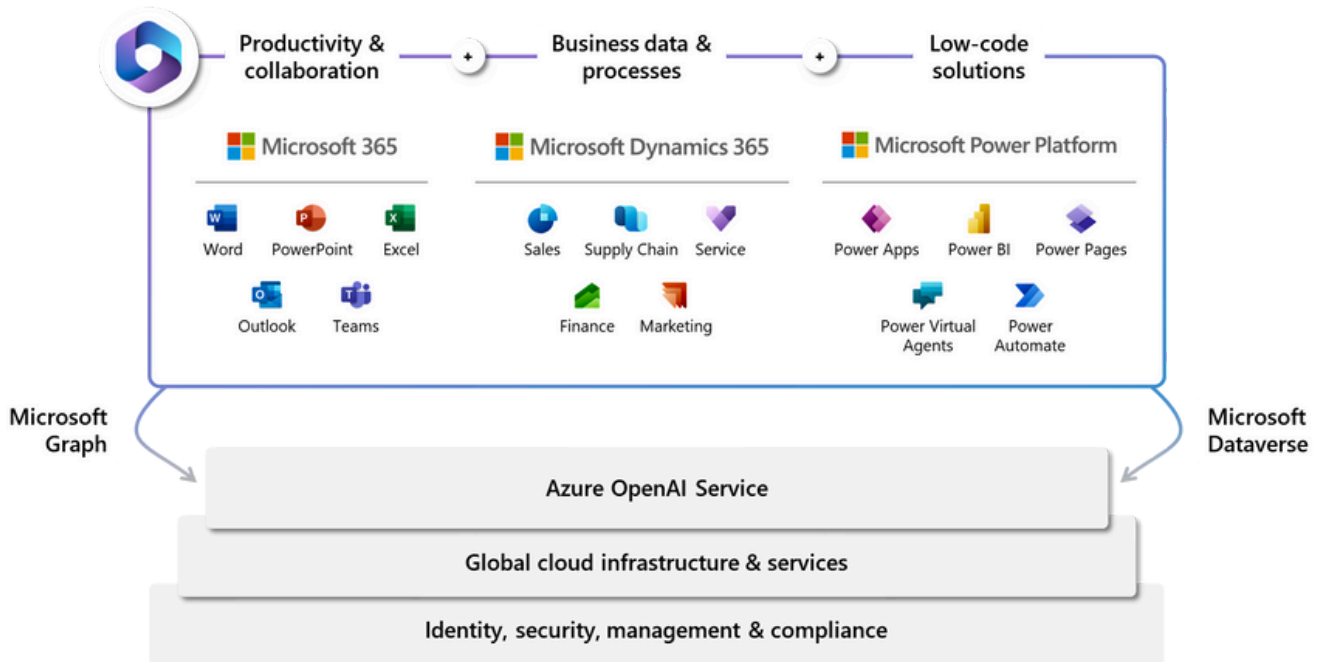
Manufacturing

With D365, workers experience rapid shopfloor tagging and production reporting and can optimizie proudction scheduling using product attributes. Maintaining accurate and timely inventory levels through raw material demand forecasting and real-time inventory consumption is a game changer for manufacturing and shopfloor efficiency.

Procurement

Enable all workforce to request items and have approvals performed efficiently for items that are not automatically planned. Maintain all forms of trade agreements with vendors to streamline the purchasing process. Configure the system to support corporate purchasing policies.

Financials

Capture high-level reporting detail with a flexible, multi-dimensional account structure. Support for cost accounting through tightly integrated manfacturing and integrated Buisiness Intelligence solutions with customized dashboards and KPIs that help make your financial reporting a breeze.

Partner Ecosystem

Dynamics 365 is delivered through a vast network of partners with broad and deep vertical experiences. Your consultants understand manufacturing across many industries and can offer guidance, custimization, efficent configuration, and ongoing support.

Logistics and Supply Chain

Plan a load and manage freight rating, routing, dispatch, and freight bill payment through an integrated transportation module. Enable broad visitility to the whole organization for when loads are shipped and what they cost all on the same platform.

Warehousing and Inventory

The system has the flexibility to enable efficient warehouse processes and provide real-time inventory management through the advanced warehouse module. Empower your sales force to better customer service with accurate available-to-promise (ATP) calculations.

Scalability and Flexibility

With powerful tools and a agile platform, enterprises utilizing D365 have the ability to handle day-to-day challenges and captilize on growth opportunites.

Integrated Business Tools

Maximize end user's time with the power of Microsoft tools including, Export API, Workflow Designer, Document management, Excel Data Connector app, and more.

Business Intelligence

Share crucial data through Power BI and enable new processes through the Power Platform. Turn easy access data into valuable decision making tools.

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Microsoft Continues to Develop AI Features for Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain Management
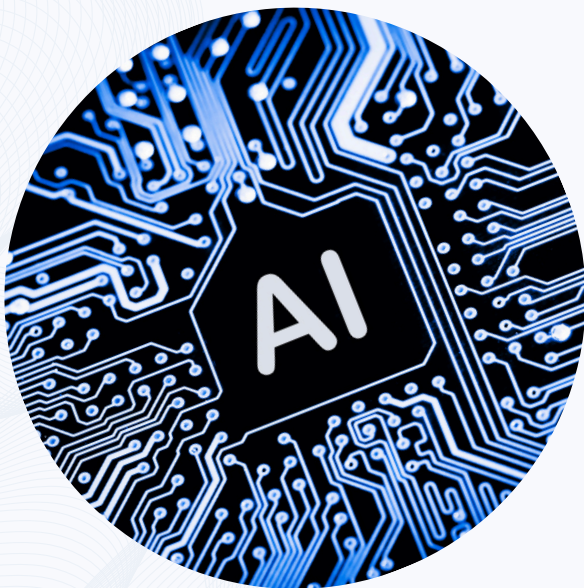

Dynamics 365   +   Copilot

Since its release in 2023, Microsoft has continually enhanced its generative artificial intelligence, Copilot, integrating it with its powerful Dynamics 365 ERP plat-forms. To streamline users' experiences of Dynamics 365 interfaces, Copilot serves as a companion or guide, saving users time and helping businesses capitalize its resources.

Through machine learning, Copilot adapts to your business needs and operations, enabling enterprises to extract more value through efficiency, making data easier to access, and targeting tedious tasks that prevent workers from creative, strategic work.

Microsoft Copilot

Copilot in Dynamics 365 transforms frontline operations, putting AI in the flow of work, giving skilled and knowledgeable workers access to relevant information where and when they need it.

Data Summarization

Microsoft has integrated it's AI with data feeds to help streamline data collecting and analysis. Save hours of work, as AI will sort through multiple pages of data, presenting key insights to help workers make data-driven decisions faster.

Targeted Functionality

Utilizing AI for Forecasting Models, Intelligent Order Management, Business Performace Ana-lytics, and Invoice Capture, enable enterprises to increase productivity without overburdening staff with tedious workloads.

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Fix common pain points that hinder growth and prevent your company from operating at peak efficiency.

Aging legacy systems
Legacy systems require frequent infrastructure refreshes, maintenance, and labor. With these old systems, it's easy to stifle growth.

Heavy reliance on customizations
Companies can find their on-premise systems heavily customized over the years, placing them at risk when the IT staff or system developers leave the company. This situation can make legacy software costly to maintain and manage. It can even put the company's data at risk.

Static data hindering decision-making and flexibility
Legacy systems often prevent access to real-time data. Without tools that make financial reporting data easy to access, managing core business functions without accurate up-to-date information is complex and risky.

Disjointed, manual financial and accounting processes
In big enterprises disjointed reporting results in inefficiency and avoidable errors. Uniting processes on one platform enables automated tasks to produce accurate, rapid data, which alleviates staff from tedious processes and greatly reduces misinformation and data that has become relevant.

Unable to scale due to complex supply chain models
With aged or legacy systems that are heavily customized operations aren't scaleable. Doing business in an elastic market requires a system that can handle an increase in volume without requiring more costs. Your technology should adapt and help promote best practices and consistency business-wide.

Allocating resources for less productive work
With old systems, burdened with heavy customizations, enterprises are forced to allocate staff and developers' time and resources to maintaining and managing these systems. With Dynamics 365 Microsoft manages maintenance through quarterly updates, enabling your developers and IT staff to focus on improving business processes and key initiatives.

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Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain Management ROI Potential during and after implementation

To give companies a good idea of the kind of investment they're making, Microsoft commissioned an economic impact report to quant-ify the potential return on investment users of Microsoft Dynamics 365 could realize.

The following figures are based on a composite of interviews and data of five enterprises in various sectors that implemented Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain Management.

Summary of Economic Impact

Dynamics 365 Finance

Costs:
Subscription fees, initial partner implementation and support fees, internal implementation and ongoing management effort.

Benefits:
Productivity improvements, reduced burden on IT staff, savings of legacy cost, ease-to-access data, visibility.

Financial ROI Summary:
Total Benefits (risk-adjusted):
Year 1: $2,458,771
Year 2: $2,503,915
Year 3: $2,549,059
Total: $7,511,746

Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management

Costs:
Implementation, Subscription fees, Support and Management.

Benefits:
Increased capacity, reduced machine downtime, increase developer productivity, infrastrucute footprint consolidation.

Financial ROI Summary:
Total Benefits (risk-adjusted):
Year 1: $3,754,800
Year 2: $21,681,900
Year 3: $30,603,825
Total: $56,040,525

The above figures are for companies that have implemented D365 Finance and Supply Chain Management. However, if your business isn't looking for the vast functionality of F&SCM, Microsoft D365 Business Central is a great platform that offers manageability and a robust suite of third-party integrations for small to mid-level enterprises.

SSNW Note:

States Industries was able to capture $2 million in benefits after implementing Dynamics AX, Microsoft's precursor to Finance and Supply Chain Management.

The visibility gained with AX gave them insight to their vendor selection, learning there was value to be realized by enhancing who they purchased their un-graded cherry wood from.

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Collaborations with Strategic Solutions NW

Coupling broad and deep knowledge of Microsoft's Dynamics ERP platforms with a team of in-house developers, business analysts, and consultants, Strategic Solutions NW is a full-service consulting firm with the experience and ability to implement, configure, and create software solutions that precisely meet our client's business needs. Additionally, our team of senior consultants and business analysts have extensive experience in global operations alongside company mergers and acquisitions. With an average tenure of 12 years amongst our staff, we utilize our collective experience to continually push the bounds of traditional technology consulting, seeking creative ways for our client's businesses to maximize their investments, discover value, and reach peak efficiency.

Since 2006, we have helped several manufacturers integrate their global enterprises with Microsoft Dynamics 365. Our collaborations consistently deliver businesses better processes and efficiency by streamlining operations, eliminating redundant and wasteful processes and software, and strategically positioning our clients to scale and capitalize on growth opportunities. Our ERP partners have dealt with complex implementations that have required navigating global operations and warehousing modules, complicated manufacturing requirements, and intricate webs of third-party integrations. Continually, our clients seek out our team of business analysts and developers to help implement and expand their Dynamics 365 footprint, looking for more ways to extract value from their business.

Seeing Microsoft continually invest in Dynamics, engineering it to be a flexible ERP platform that elevates processes and scalability, SSNW decided to commit to specializing in implementing, integrating, and configuring Dynamics 365 ERP platforms for our clients. In our nearly 20 years of working with D365, we've seen it work tremendously for manufacturers in a variety of industries, such as, Planar, Biamp, States Industries. It allows executives to make decisions based on real-time data and renders financial close a breeze. It breaks down silos between business functions, enabling communication of data, information, and operational processes across segments. Ultimately, it enables and empowers organizations to scale.

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Planar

When Planar acquired Natural Point for its state-of-the-art VR motion tracking, Strategic Solutions NW implemented D365 Finance and Operations for Planar's newly acquired company. Prior to the implementation, Natural Point's technology had fallen out of support putting the company's data at significant risk.

Key Challenges

Given their use of basic accounting software and disparate legacy systems to handle complicated manufacturing, supply chain, and fin-ancial operations, Natural Point couldn't cull real-time data, placing them at a significant disadvantage. Unable to perform timely financial closes, Natural Point's operations needed to be upgraded to utilize the tools and technology that enabled Planar to scale and maximize its growth. Through the process, there was two-fold pressure to not only implement the technology but also to mitigate the risk for the fragility of their current systems.

Actions

- Implemented Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations for Planar's wholly-owned subsidiary, Natural Point
- Integrated shopfloor manufacturing, supply chain, and order management to Finance and Operations
- Migrated their data from manufacturing legacy systems to the cloud
- Integrated their custom website to manage sales in D365 Finance and Operations.

Results

- ERP consolidation enabled Planar to standardize business practices and processes across their organization
- Natural Point cloud-based ERP platform would protect data loss from outages and crashes
- Rapid access to real-time data to make informed decisions regarding cost and production models
- Automated numerous manual processes freeing up AP and AR resources for more strategic work
- After successful implementation, Planar could readily extend its tools to Natural Point to enable growth and scalability

Integrated Third-Party Integrations

(AvaTax) from Avalara
- Integrated with the Microsoft Dynamics platform.
- Automates tax calculation and filing SalesForce
- CRM software to store, track, and manage customer information
- Cloud-based to enable communication between teams Enovia
- Product Lifecycle Management software for data-driven project management
- Connect critical partners with contextual workflows

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Biamp

Biamp is a privately held provider of media systems that power robust audiovisual installations. Offering high-quality products, Biamp quickly grew into an international enterprise and soon needed to replace its homegrown software system.

Looking for an ERP platform that would pair with lean manufacturing software, Biamp found AX (Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations precursor) and sought out SSNW for its expertise in implementing Microsoft ERP products.

Key Challenges

One of the main challenges that Biamp faced prior to implementating Microsoft was a lack of integration between its business units. With disparate pieces of software to run a wide variety of functions, their data was siloed, preventing them from taking business operations to the next level. They wanted a system robust enough to handle their expansion goals and one that could open communication between its different branches of business.

Biamp at this stage already had complex business processes. The business needed an agile, dependable system with ease to access data for its shopfloor and costing models, and one that could maintain a high level of accuracy for its inventory management and advanced warehousing. After performing a proof of concept for 90 days, SSNW was hired for the main implementation.

Actions

- Integrated Biamp's data and operations with inventory management, purchase order management, general ledger, accounts payable and accounts receivable, and master scheduling MRP.
- Developed methods to import forecasting without system modification
- Developed pathways to import real-time cost updates
- Built shopfloor interface for user-friendliness and efficiency
- Helped define the process for managing engineering change orders to release new products and update existing products

Results

- Biamp could load in cost models for purchased items
- Import bill of materials from their computerated design system into AX
- Could easily absorb the following US and European acquisitions and expand operations internationally.

Phase 2

Our work with Biamp continued as they expanded. They asked SSNW to help with the integrations to get their acquired businesses up to speed.

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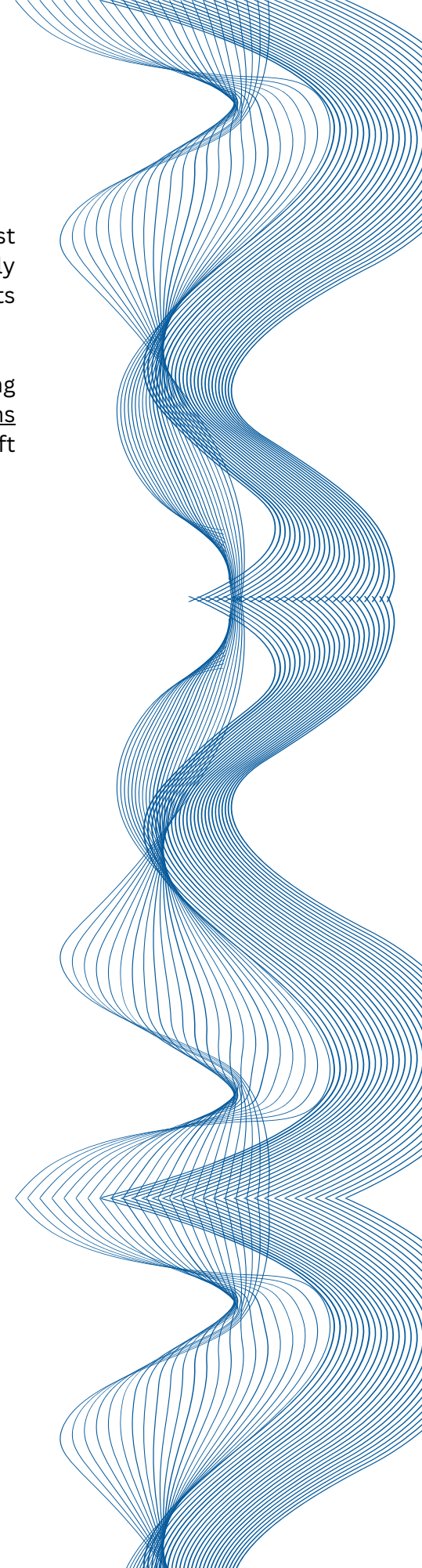
Biamp Phase 2

Acquistion of Apart Audio

After a successful implementation of AX for Biamp's core business, they were expertly positioned to acquire new companies without changing their system. They made two acquisitions. One was Audioprof Group which was based in Philadelphia. The other was Apart Audio based in Antwerp, Belgium.

Because Apart Audio was based in Europe this posed new complications for the integration. How was Biamp going to see US-manufactured items in Europe? How were they going to divide their sales teams? How did having a European presence affect how commissions were structured?

The answers to these questions then pointed to how we were going to integrate the businesses and how we were going to structure reporting and perform sales confirmation processes.

Actions

- Held a Kaizen event to lead improvement plans on the sales confirmation process
- Integrated Esker into AX
- Determined the types of reporting they needed to perform between their US and European operations
- Determined how their US-manufactured items would be sold in Europe
- Configured available-to-promise software and process

Results

- Significant efficiency increase in sales confirmation processes
  - Allowed Biamp to automatically create sales orders from emails containing purchase documents
- Streamlined Available-to-promise process
- Visibility over US and European transactions
- Reduction on median order admin cycle by greater than 90%

Integrated Third-Party Integrations

Experlogix CPQ configurator
- Fully integrated with AX out-of-the-box
- Simultaneous and continuous updates with Dynamics AX
- Rapidly configures price and quotes product
- Minimizes maintenance via the Experlogix rules engine Esker
- Automates sales orders from emails containing purchase documents eBecs Lean Manufacturing
- Built to be used with Microsoft Dynamics AX
- Minimizes waste within manufacturing while remaining with controlled margins.

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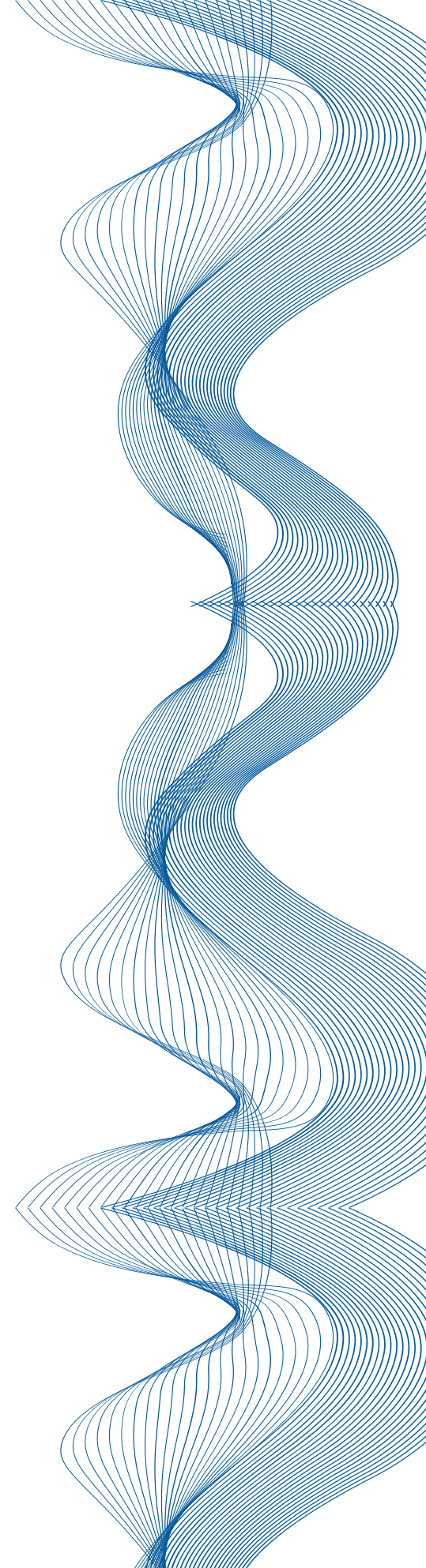
States Industries

Founded in 1966, States Industries is a hardwood panel man-ufacturer that employs close to 500 people, from millwrights to finish line technicians, maintains bills-of-material for more than 400,000 constructions, and typically adds 10 new ones daily. States was using an antiquated, highly customized ERP system that was not fully integrated with their services, causing inefficiencies in the sales process, product integrator, quote generations, and more. SSNW assisted States in determining the best solutions to streamline the quote-to-order creation process and make overall changes to workflow via a new ERP system.

Key Challenges

States' existing ERP software was nearly obsolete and insufficiently integrated and routine processes were cumbersome. For instance, its customer quote generator required engineering to perform price buildup and check material availability, all of which was managed offline. In other areas, their system couldn't isolate the freight component of delivered prices.

Additionally, there were workflow inefficiencies, as well. Sales would routinely ask engineering for panel construction rules even though these rules were documented in a manual. However, even if sales did use the manual, much of the information wasn't up-to-date due to engineering decisions made on the fly. Lastly, capacity planning only occurred at a high level, resulting in delivery dates only accurate for a week.

Actions

- Fully integrate States' operations, software, workflows, and processes with Microsoft Dynamics AX.
- Configure a host of third-party software vendors to meet States' unique manufacturing and distribution needs, including SSNW's proprietary Forest Products Industry solution.

Results

- Improved ability to sell and schedule to constrained capacity and promise delivery dates based on CTP functionality.
- With Experlogix CPQ, States was now able to rapidly configure price and quote products.
- Process and workflow improvements included standardized freight rating, routing, and allocations to sales order items and developed processes and tools to evaluate supplier performance
- Our efforts lead to tangible benefits of close to $2 million annually

Integrated Third-Party Integrations

Experlogix CPQ configurator
- Fully integrated with AX out-of-the-box
- Simultaneous and continuous updates with Dynamics AX
- Rapidly configures price and quotes product

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Let's look at how Microsoft technology can help streamline your business.

Book a Free Consultation!

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