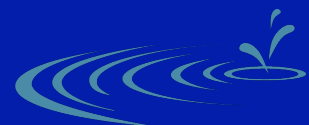Flow International teams with Raining Virtue Solutions to reach new heights of business insight by leveraging real-time business intelligence for Dynamics AX.

RAINING VIRTUE
S O L U T I O N S

Flow International, Headquartered in Kent, Washington and with offices in Indiana, Brazil, Germany, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, Taiwan, Japan and China, develops and manufactures ultra-high pressure water jet cutting technologies for a variety of industries and specialty applications. As the global leader in water jet cutting systems, Flow International recognized that it needed standard information systems to handle the agile business climate and to support a single, global organization. In July 2009, Flow International started implementing Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Working through the implementation of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) application for an international manufacturing organization introduces a variety of real business challenges. While Microsoft Dynamics AX consolidated and improved business processes and application infrastructure, it did not adequately support enterprise wide information requirements. Make no mistake, ERP does not imply "point and click" or "out of the box" information.

Flow's multiple companies, sites, currencies and languages along with five Dynamics AX financial dimensions made data consolidation difficult and time consuming. Flow's vision of an enterprise wide business intelligence solution was, at the time of implementation, just that, a vision…

HOW WE HELPED

Raining Virtue Solutions recognized that a cross-company business intelligence platform would consolidate and standardize data, provide efficient access to key information, and improve forecasting and time-to-decision. Our goal was to keep the solution simple, standard and sustainable.

Our strategy focused on getting the right information to the right people at the right time. To accomplish this we had to involve both business management and technology solutions. The following achievements outlined the key successes of the project:

Standardized corporate key performance indicators (KPIs) across AX companies. This involved analyzing Flow's disparate methods of measuring the business.

- On-Time Shipment (OTS)
- Purchase Price Variance (PPV)
- Inventory Turns
- Executable Revenue
- Global Expense Reporting
- Daily Sales Average (DSA+)
- Gross Margin (GM)
- Sales Funnel
- Lead Time/Bin Size/Order Qty

Enabled access to any device anywhere in the world. By leveraging the existing corporate mobile platform of iOS (iPhone/iPad), we implemented a Reporting Services viewer which works with the corporate VPN.

Developed 50+ global reports, dashboards and alerts. Aimed at the point-of-impact, we developed specific analysis tools which provide clear, targeted and actionable information to the users. Whether it's an on-demand detailed listing of sales orders, or a corporate wide dashboard identifying actual on-time shipment or a sales division dashboard being distributed to the division managers weekly; we treated each case differently to provide the greatest level of business impact.

Introduced sales insights not achievable within Dynamics AX. By leveraging SQL Server's Change Data Capture (CDC) we could provide insights into when sales activities happened and track those activities over time. This allowed a simplified Sales Funnel solution without modification to Dynamics AX. Knowing the velocity of the sales cycle is important to any sales organization, we provided that visibility with out-of-the-box technology that Flow already owned.

NEW HEIGHTS ACHIEVED

Within a few months, Raining Virtue designed and implemented an enterprise-class business intelligence solution - from white-boarding ideas to a global launch localized for languages and currencies across multiple countries.

Flow International was now empowered with a fast, cross-company business intelligence solution featuring:

Standard key performance indicators. All Dynamics AX implemented companies

within Flow International now have a standard and consistent set of KPIs and toolset to manage their business. This resulted in reduced manual reporting and increased quality of information and business decisions.

Timely and targeted insight. Across all Dynamics AX companies, Flow decision makers now have critical information available in real-time and in the format that best supports their role. Whether on the shop floor, in corporate offices, at customer location or in an airplane, Flow can access business intelligence from anywhere on any device.

Significantly increased data quality. With a set of audit and exception reports developed, the quality of data stored within Dynamics AX has increased dramatically. Data-driven reports now get distributed nightly when data conditions are uncovered within the system.

Globalized and standardized multi-national reporting. Any Flow transaction within any Dynamics AX company can be consolidated into any format chosen by the user, regardless of how the company is configured.

Significantly reduced manual reporting. Gone are the days of manual reporting via ODBC connections or batch data extracts into Excel. All data retrieval is centralized through business intelligence which provides a single source of the truth. Not a single Flow employee has direct access to the SQL Server!

Zero performance footprint. By leveraging SQL Server Replication, our business intelligence solutions have a 0% performance impact on the production Dynamics AX system.

TECHNOLOGY HIGHLIGHTS

The following technology components were leveraged to provide the global business intelligence solution for Microsoft Dynamics AX at Flow International:

- Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009
- SQL Server 2008 R2
- SharePoint 2010
- Excel 2010 - PowerPivot
- SQL Server - Change Data Capture
- Mobi Reports Pro from Mobi Weave (iPad/iPhone)

"Prior to the implementation of Dynamics AX we had many sources of data; system extracts, Excel spreadsheets and other manually organized repositories were scattered throughout the organization, each carrying a unique and sometimes different perspective of the business. I turned to Raining Virtue for support and in a short amount of time implemented a world-class solution across our global enterprise.   We now have KPI dashboards, operational, financial and system reporting capabilities at our fingertips for all Dynamics AX implemented locations. The best thing about our solution is that it provides real-time information, while at the same time utilizing our existing core infrastructure."

Daric Schweikart, Flow International
Vice President & CIO Information Technology

About Raining Virtue Solutions

Powered by a team of business and technology professionals, Raining Virtue Solutions has the end-to-end capabilities to empower an organization of any size to get the right information into the hands of the right people at the right time. Using the tools you already own, Raining Virtue Solutions will design the right dashboards, scorecards, reports, and ad hoc solutions to specifically meet your organization's needs. Contact us now for more information about how Raining Virtue Solutions can help you.

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