



Microsoft Dynamics Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Agriculture

Customer Profile

San Joaquin Valley Farms (SJVF) is the sales and marketing arm of A&P Growers, a local collective that provides marketing, distribution, and sales for local growers.

Business Situation

A&P subsidiaries maintained separate accounting and business management systems. As a result, it was difficult to generate consolidated reports, and few people had insight into the performance of the organization.

Solution

SJVF worked with ACE Microtechnology to upgrade and standardize the subsidiaries on Microsoft Dynamics™ GP Advanced Management and to transition to the Business Ready Licensing model.

Benefits

- Maximum value from existing investment
- Broader access to information
- Timely reporting

Growers' Collective Consolidates Business Management and Extends Functionality

“Before, I was the only one who would use Microsoft FRx because only one person could be in it at a time. Now, more people have access, and more people can benefit from the insight and analysis.”

Ana Feke, Director of Finance, San Joaquin Valley Farms

San Joaquin Valley Farms (SJVF) is a grower-owned sales and marketing company and a subsidiary of A&P Growers. Three A&P subsidiaries used Microsoft Dynamics™ GP business software, but until recently, each maintained separate accounting and business management systems. As a result, it was difficult to generate consolidated reports, and few people in the organization had insight into the performance of the individual units. SJVF worked with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner ACE Microtechnology to standardize the subsidiaries on Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management and to transition to the Business Ready Licensing model. The enhanced functionality, including fixed asset management and manufacturing systems, and the flexible licensing model have enabled the companies to provide employees across the organization with information and functionality to help them work more efficiently.



“The ability to manage fixed assets in Microsoft Dynamics GP is a significant improvement.... Now, we can run items directly from accounts payable into fixed assets.”

Ana Feke, Director of Finance, San Joaquin Valley Farms

Situation

As one of the first farms to cultivate almonds and pistachios in California's fertile San Joaquin Valley, San Joaquin Valley Farms (SJVF) now markets high-quality nuts through a variety of channels, including online, retail, and catalog sales. The company serves as the marketing arm of parent company A&P Growers. A&P Growers provides marketing, distribution, and sales for nuts grown, harvested, processed, and packaged by a local network that also includes the Meridian Nut Growers Alliance and Valley Quality Foods.

Although each of the three companies under A&P Growers used Microsoft Dynamics™ GP business software for financial and business management, their systems were maintained separately. Licensing restrictions required that each of the subsidiaries maintain a separate deployment of Microsoft Dynamics GP and limited the number of employees who had access to the systems or data. As a result, each subsidiary was using a separate database and a different version of the software, making it difficult for employees to share information and nearly impossible for managers or analysts to see a complete view of the complex operations.

“The parent company, A&P, had a goal to consolidate financials,” explains Ana Feke, Director of Finance at SJVF. “But they also needed to see the separate financials for every company. The first step toward that was to get all the companies using the same general ledger account.”

The complexities of managing multiple companies—and the need for additional insight into both collective and individual financial performance—prompted SJVF and its sister companies to upgrade and standardize on Microsoft Dynamics GP. At the same time, they sought to extend the

business software to include manufacturing, payroll, and management of fixed assets.

To maximize its current investment in Microsoft Dynamics GP, SJVF needed a cost-effective licensing approach that would enable the company to add enhanced functionality across forecasting and fixed asset management, and expand current user roles without incurring prohibitive expenses. The plan also needed the flexibility to support future business growth with additional modules as the company's needs change.

“Microsoft Dynamics GP Standard was great, but it didn't handle the needs of all the companies combined, and we continually ran up against the 10-user limit,” explains Feke. “Commissions needed to be handled differently; the parent company needed to consolidate reports and analysis; and we needed multiple users to interact with the system and reports. We needed a system that could manage the assets and the manufacturing for more than one company. Our needs had outgrown what the basic package could offer.”

Solution

To meet these sophisticated needs, SJVF turned to Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner ACE Microtechnology. ACE standardized the three companies on Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management—a full business management offering that includes advanced financial capabilities and addresses many of the complex distribution and manufacturing requirements faced by the collective.

In addition, ACE transitioned SJVF to Business Ready Licensing for Microsoft Dynamics, which offered a cost-effective way to access additional functionality and to extend the solution to new roles and employees within the companies.

“Their only option would have been to add a third license if Business Ready Licensing was not available to them. They would have had three different versions of Microsoft Dynamics GP for three different companies under a single parent company.”

Susan Looby, Principal, ACE Microtechnology

Under the new licensing model, the three A&P subsidiaries have access to a single implementation of Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management. In addition to the business essentials, Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management provides a broad set of functionality including:

- Advanced business intelligence and reporting
- Manufacturing
- Advanced supply chain management
- Advanced financial management, including collections and cash management

Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management and the flexible licensing model meet the unique needs of each of the four companies. The parent company, A&P, maintains its own database for Microsoft Dynamics GP, but has access to the combined general ledger and consolidated financials through Microsoft FRx® software.

Both Meridian and Valley Quality Foods rely heavily on manufacturing modules to manage their processing operations. SJVF uses the extended system to manage fixed assets for its own operation and for Valley Quality Foods, an equipment-intensive operation and recent acquisition.

“The ability to manage fixed assets in Microsoft Dynamics GP is a significant improvement,” says Feke. “Previously, our parent company was tracking our fixed assets on old software that didn’t communicate with our general ledger. I depended on them to send me a report every month to finish financials, and I had to manually enter every transaction and manually calculate depreciation. Now, we can run items directly from accounts payable into fixed assets.”

The Business Ready Licensing model also enables all three subsidiaries to provide users in different roles across the companies with access to the system. Each of the three

subsidiary companies has six or seven employees who access accounting information on a routine basis. In addition to the traditional accounting roles, executives and owners have access to reporting and analysis; operations managers can access the manufacturing modules; and marketing and sales have insight into bills of materials through advanced supply chain management.

Benefits

Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management provides SJVF and its sister companies with much-needed functionality, while the transition to Business Ready Licensing has enabled them to extend this functionality to a broader set of users across the organization.

Maximum Value from Existing Investment

Business Ready Licensing offered SJVF and the entire A&P group of companies a cost-effective licensing approach, enabling them to scale Microsoft Dynamics GP in a way that phased in new functionality without sacrificing the initial investment in software and services. Without the flexibility of Business Ready Licensing, consolidating financials across the four companies might have been cost prohibitive and overly complex.

“Their only option would have been to add a third license if Business Ready Licensing was not available to them,” explains Susan Looby, Principal at ACE. “They would have had three different versions of Microsoft Dynamics GP for three different companies under a single parent company.”

Broader Access to Information

The concurrent user licensing model of Business Ready Licensing has also enabled the companies to provide critical business functionality to the people who need it, when they need it. SJVF makes use of this flexibility,

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adding new users as needed or as they bring new functionality online.

The most noticeable benefit is that more people in different roles throughout the organization can share information and work more efficiently and knowledgeably. Feke cites use of the system by sales and marketing, company owners, and financial analysts as evidence of the broad appeal. In particular, access to financial reporting and analysis through Microsoft FRx has improved insight and decision making at the highest levels. Feke explains, "Before, I was the only one who would use Microsoft FRx because only one person could be in it at a time. Now, more people have access, and more people can benefit from the insight and analysis. And because we all use the same general ledger, executives can view reports for all companies across the organization."

Timely Reporting

The new licensing model has also increased the speed at which Feke and others in the organization receive critical financial data. "Providing the right people with access to information has significantly improved the timeliness of our reporting," explains Feke. "Before, I had to wait for someone else to run a report, or I had to wait for information to come in from the various companies. Now, I have real-time visibility into the information I need and can run commissions, calculate fixed assets, whatever I need, in a fraction of the time."

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to: www.microsoft.com/dynamics

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics GP Advanced Management
- Microsoft FRx

Partners

- ACE Microtechnology