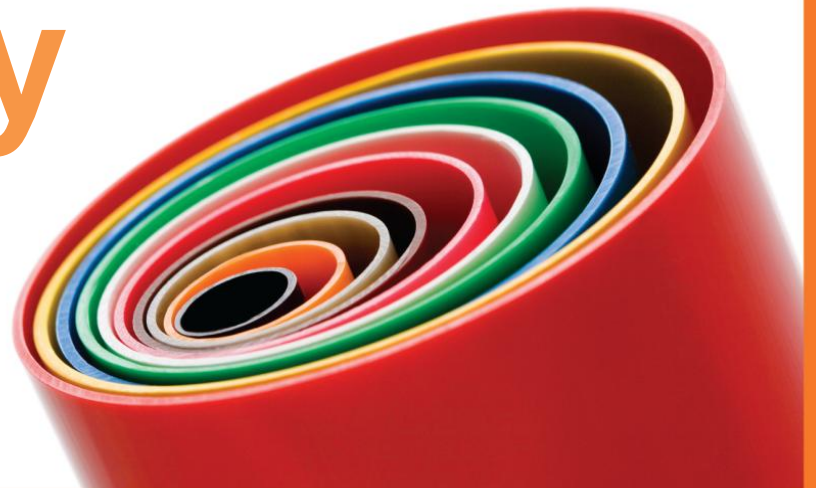


Connecting relationships globally



Avanade and Accenture help government agency merge contacts and boost service with Dynamics CRM solution



From Accenture and Microsoft

Business Situation

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture promotes the export of U.S. agricultural products. It was difficult for staff in globally dispersed offices to facilitate global trade when they worked with isolated pockets of information.

As a federal government service agency, the FAS is an information-based organization. Its overseas offices monitor international issues, and when problems arise in export markets, counselors and attachés play a critical role in providing immediate assistance to U.S. exporters. Trade information sent to Washington, D.C., is used to develop strategies to increase market access, monitor trade agreements, and improve programs and policies to make U.S. farm products more competitive.

“As a global organization whose mandate is to create economic opportunity for American agriculture by expanding global markets, we require a solid foundation of information that is visible, shareable and discoverable,” says Jeff Porter, Management Analyst within the Knowledge Management Branch at FAS. “With our legacy customer relationship management solution, Goldmine, we maintained more than 500,000 contacts and related information records. However, instead of having one system with a centralized database, we maintained approximately 85 different instances of the solution in our global offices. These silos of data made it difficult to share information among employees. We needed to consolidate our data so that all staff

could work from the same information, improving client service, global market intelligence, incident reporting and analysis, as well as improving productivity.”

FAS staff members at different offices also collected contact information using Microsoft® Office Excel® spreadsheet software, Microsoft Access® database software, printed business cards, and handwritten notes. FAS wanted to replace these ad hoc systems with a centralized client management solution available to all staff at global offices and headquarters to facilitate information access and sharing around the world.

Business Solutions

The FAS chose Microsoft Dynamics® CRM 4.0 to replace its legacy system. This decision was based on an overall migration to a Microsoft infrastructure on the part of the USDA. Given the global scale of the proposed migration and the fact that IT staff at FAS had never worked with the Microsoft Dynamics CRM product, FAS wrote a request for proposal to solicit help from a technology partner.

Out of a field of eight respondents, FAS chose the Avanade and Accenture team. “Avanade addressed every item that we detailed in our requirements,” says Ted Goldammer, Branch Chief within the Knowledge Management Branch at FAS. “Other companies alluded to their experience with Microsoft Dynamics CRM, but Avanade proved it.”

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— **Jeff Porter, Management Analyst,**
Knowledge Management Branch,
Foreign Agricultural Service

“Avanade completed the project on time and within budget. For the first time ever, FAS has a consolidated, accessible database of contact and client information that we can use to maximize the value of our information and improve our services.”

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Knowledge Management Branch,
Foreign Agricultural Service

The Avanade and Accenture team deployed Microsoft Dynamics CRM and a Microsoft SQL Server® 2005 database at the Washington, D.C., head office. Then they faced the challenge of mapping data from every instance of Goldmine and the hundreds of Office Excel spreadsheets and Access databases also in use at the agency's 85 offices and migrating this data to the new database. "By the go-live date, the Avanade team had built a Web-enabled, consolidated repository of more than 500,000 records, available to more than 900 users.

Meanwhile, Porter and the FAS team communicated with administrators and staff at each of the global offices to help prepare them for the new solution. "We tried to insulate the local administrator and the end users from the data migration part of the project," says Porter. "Avanade did a great job of performing the migration independently in just four weeks."

Training globally dispersed users on the new technology was another challenge that Avanade helped to solve. Over six weeks, the team produced recorded Microsoft NetMeeting sessions and Microsoft Office Live Meeting video clips that were posted on a SharePoint site to walk users through specific Microsoft Dynamics CRM functions.

"Avanade completed the project on time and within budget," adds Goldammer. "For the first time ever, FAS has a consolidated, accessible database of contact and client information that we can use to maximize the value of our information and improve our services."

FAS chose Avanade and Accenture because of Accenture's familiarity with the USDA based on the companies' past collaboration and Avanade's demonstrated technical experience with Microsoft Dynamics CRM. At the end of the project, Porter and his team still count these factors as one of the team's greatest values. "The project lead did a great job from a technical standpoint, analyzing the business and putting it into terms that worked within the Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution and made sense to us," says Porter. "We struck up a good relationship early on."

Part of that relationship depended on Avanade's attentive customer service. Says Goldammer: "Compared to other contractors we have worked with, Avanade was extremely responsive, dealing with issues and problems right away, so the project never lost its momentum."

Avanade introduced two of its proprietary assets to add further value to the project: a data auditing asset, and a Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007 integration asset. The data auditing asset tracks modifications to any field in the account, contact, and incident entities within Microsoft Dynamics CRM. "This will be of long-term value from an administrative standpoint because it shows pre- and post-modifications to any field in those entities," says Porter.

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Results

Since Avanade replaced 85 instances of the legacy Goldmine solution with a single, enterprise-wide Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution, the FAS is continuing to review procedures to improve client service, global market intelligence, incident reporting and analysis, as well as productivity.

“Everything we do for clients—and by clients, I mean all of the stakeholders we serve—comes back to information,” says Porter. “We can hardly expect to break down barriers to global trade while struggling with internal barriers to accessing and sharing the information we need to do our work. Avanade helped us break down our information silos to better serve our clients, no matter where they are in the world.”

The easy discovery of information for globally-dispersed FAS employees is crucial to quickly handling potentially damaging issues and helps FAS control evolving incidents. Porter gives an example. “If some tainted oysters from a U.S. exporter show up in Hong Kong, that’s one incident,” he says. “But if analysts in Washington can use the new system to see that a similar event occurred in Taiwan yesterday, and then again in Singapore, and that the oysters all come from the same distributor, that’s a disturbing trend. With this new solution, we can be ahead of the curve and handle the situation sooner rather than later.”

Providing better services also requires better quality information. By having Avanade extensively map the data

proceeding to then migrate it into a consolidated database, FAS has a cleaner set of contact records for anyone to access. “We have removed the approximately 30 percent of redundant contact data maintained at all the offices,” says Porter. “We are approaching a point, where we know for every unique individual which organization he or she works for, who he or she has been in contact with, and all the documents that are associated with that person. With the information in a more trusted and structured format it’s becoming increasingly valuable.”

With reliable, consolidated information at their fingertips, FAS staff can work more productively. The new solution is a more efficient contact management and client information system, which means employees have more time to better serve FAS constituents.

“The most important benefit of our engagement with Avanade is how the team helped shape the new technology to fit our world,” concludes Porter. “Ostensibly, Microsoft Dynamics CRM is a sales force automation system; however, the Avanade team had the skills and the technical knowledge to understand what we do and shape the system to meet our needs. It made me realize that, at some point, Microsoft Dynamics CRM stops being a commercial off-the-shelf system and starts being a platform for client relationship management we can build on for the future. That’s the lasting contribution that Avanade has made to our organization.”

About the FAS

Based in Washington, D.C., the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) works to improve foreign market access for U.S. products, improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace, and provide food aid and technical assistance. Approximately 1,000 employees, including agricultural economists, marketing experts, agricultural counselors, attachés, trade officers, and locally employed FAS staff members work in more than 102 offices in 82 countries.



About Avanade

Avanade provides business technology services that connect insight, innovation and expertise in Microsoft® technologies to help customers realize results. www.avanade.com.

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