

Avanade: CRM's Power Unleashed Through Flexible Infrastructure



Customers are the kings because they hold life-and-death power over a business. To make sure every whisper a customer utters is properly recorded – and to learn what they desire and deliver it to them before they ask – businesses buy CRM.

Yet with customer data in multiple applications, people working across different time zones, and several customer communication channels always flowing, the implications of a CRM implementation are often enormous.

How can a business ensure that it can sufficiently handle these implications? By having a scalable, reliable, and – most of all – flexible technical infrastructure.

A global technology integrator focused on the Microsoft platform, Avanade designs and builds infrastructure that is flexible, cost-effective, and easy to adapt. We help you evaluate your current position, plan for any changes, and then implement your changes to provide the best long-term platform for your CRM solution – a platform that has the stability you need now and the flexibility to support the changes you'll undoubtedly want to make in the future.

Flexibility Is Critical

Implementing CRM is about getting to know your customers. But what if you get to know them and find that you're business needs to change to serve them better or attract more of their business? It's great to know what your customers want, but unless you can deliver the required changes, CRM becomes a badly underutilized investment.

Consider one of Avanade's customers, a financial institution. A datamining effort told this organization that its customers who checked the balance of their accounts more than twice a day over the course of a week were highly likely to close their account and move to a rival bank.

Because the company had a flexible infrastructure, it was able to quickly move from data mining to real-time analysis of its customer behavior by linking its CRM system to the analysis tools. Today, the company is able to identify at-risk customers and intervene to restore their confidence before they take their banking elsewhere.

Creating a real-time analysis application is a significant project. Linking other applications to CRM can also be an extensive undertaking. But this company was saved by the fact that it could make these changes so quickly.

Implement With Speed

Another financial services customer Avanade encountered made an interesting discovery using its CRM system: the majority of its clientele were retirees whose conservative money management practices meant they made infrequent purchases.

The company responded by adding a finance facility so customers could spread their payments out over time. The company was able to implement this system in less than 90 days and, within a year, customers were less jittery about spending more, and loyalty and overall sales increased.

Without the ability to quickly build the finance facility, this company's growth path was limited. Worse still, its investment in CRM would have identified its problem, but its infrastructure would have prevented the timely development of a solution.

Microsoft: A Platform for Change

To use Avanade means to enlist the help of the best Microsoft technologists in the industry. But why have a Microsoft-based infrastructure? The Microsoft platform delivers speed-to-market, flexibility, and overall value through its:

- **Ease of integration.** Microsoft's integrated .NET platform means applications are often ready to link upon

Avanade is the premier global technology integrator for Microsoft solutions. The certified technologists at Avanade help customers use Microsoft technology to realize a lower total cost of ownership for their infrastructure and application investments. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

installation. For CRM users, this means a platform that can connect in a matter of hours, so new initiatives can be brought to market quickly.

- **Low operational cost.** Active Directory, Microsoft Operations Manager, and other tools ease administration and security, while applications such as SQL Server boast self-tuning features that require less administration than their competition.
- **Scalability.** Allied with servers like the Unisys ES7000 series, a Microsoft infrastructure can achieve mainframe-class performance and reliability at a fraction of the cost of UNIX-based systems.
- **Low acquisition costs.** The cost of Microsoft Windows licenses, CRM application licenses, hardware, and services are generally lower on the Microsoft platform than for other platforms.
- **Low training requirements/reuse of existing skills.** Nearly every business in the world has some Microsoft technology already present. Even if Microsoft is only used for file and print services, the skills and tools to run these systems can contribute to the operations of a Microsoft-based infrastructure.

As a leading global technology integrator specializing in Microsoft solutions, Avanade can help your organization realize these benefits as part of your CRM implementation or as a post-implementation optimization. >>

>> **Heritage Means Value**

Avanade was created in 2000 with a mission of helping its customers implement the Microsoft platform at enterprise scale. Since then, Avanade has helped thousands of customers use Microsoft technology to control costs and streamline systems. As a joint venture of Microsoft and Accenture, Avanade is

allowing your business to use CRM as a weapon in the battle to improve customer satisfaction (and the bottom line).

Avanade has helped many companies build infrastructure with these qualities. To help your organization evaluate its options, they created the Avanade Assessments, which examine how products such as

Where you go with this advice is up to you. But if your organization is like many of our customers, the assessment will uncover clear areas of opportunity to create savings, streamline processes, and build in some flexibility for the future.

Great technology infrastructure is both a shield and a sword, providing the reliability your CRM application demands, while allowing your business to use CRM as a weapon in the battle to improve customer satisfaction (and the bottom line).

an independent company that benefits from the strengths of its parent organizations: extensive and deep CRM knowledge from its Accenture heritage and core technology expertise from its Microsoft roots.

This heritage pays off for our customers every day: Avanade technologists work closely with Microsoft’s product development teams and, as a result, know more about Microsoft products than any other services company in the marketplace.

That knowledge – and the practical experience Avanade gains on every customer project – is constantly recycled inside the company. From every project Avanade conducts, it gleans intellectual property that it uses to create its assets: pre-built solutions with proven code and processes to enable rapid delivery of leading-edge solutions. For CRM implementations, the Avanade Connected Architecture for Infrastructure offers a proven set of practices and technologies to quickly implement the necessary infrastructure.

Can My Infrastructure Do the Job?

Great technology infrastructure is both a shield and a sword, providing the reliability your CRM application demands, while

Microsoft Windows and Active Directory and techniques such as server consolidation can help you get the most out of your infrastructure.

Know Your Starting Position

Assessments are typically short, sharp engagements, usually lasting five to six weeks and involving interaction with both your technical and business teams.

A typical infrastructure assessment produces advice on how to:

- Control costs through consolidation, centralization, optimization, and risk reduction;
- Create a more predictable infrastructure through a commitment to operational excellence; and
- Establish a reliable foundation to support future innovation.

Prioritizing Action

For most organizations, an assessment is only useful if the subsequent results are actionable and realistic. At Avanade, this business tenet forms the foundation of our recommendations.

Put simply, “rip and replace” is not an option for most organizations – nor should it be. Instead, these teams must achieve results using existing hardware and software when possible, and building on that via incremental investment.

Avanade’s technologists work with the customer’s IT team to design and implement solutions that utilize what already exists in the environment, extending those investments in practical, innovative approaches. Ever-present in this process is a commitment to adhering to business requirements so that the final solution accommodates the specific needs – and budget – of the organization. Avanade’s experienced project managers then work with the customer to determine an appropriate timeline and prioritize the overall approach to ensure maximum value with minimized disruption.

Delivering for Change

Simply put, your CRM application holds the key to improving your business. But you can’t improve performance unless you can change. Your technical infrastructure is the critical tool to enable that change. Can you afford not to have the infrastructure your CRM needs? Perhaps you should ask your competitors!

To find out more about Avanade and its infrastructure services and solutions, visit www.avanade.com/delivering or contact information@avanade.com. ■



WEB RESOURCES
 Avanade is dedicated to helping its customers use the Microsoft platform to reduce cost and drive results through standardization, consolidation, and integration. To learn more about the other solutions Avanade has to offer, visit www.avanade.com/solutions.



Avanade Delivers: A Case Study in Infrastructure Support for CRM

When a government policy change means a dramatic change in the way it does business, this utility company's CRM system became mission-critical. By crafting a new technical infrastructure to support the CRM application, Avanade gave this customer the confidence it needed to thrive in its new environment.

The Challenge: A New Infrastructure For a New CRM Application

An Asian utility company has a deadline: in a few short years, its most important contract will lapse, government policies will change, and its customers will be able to purchase energy from a broader range of suppliers. The key to defending its business in this soon-to-be-deregulated market was the company's CRM application.

Already an SAP R/3 user for many business functions, the utility decided on SAP's CRM and integrated billing solution for its CRM needs. The scale of the company's operations made the infrastructure supporting the new CRM application even more important than the application itself. CRM would be a frontline weapon in what was anticipated to be a highly competitive market. As such, any system failures or downtime would be intolerable. Similarly, an inflexible or overly complex technical infrastructure could hinder the company's ability to change at a time when responding to a rapidly evolving market would be critical to survival.

After lengthy consideration, the utility settled on the Microsoft Windows enterprise platform. The experience and skill Avanade could bring to its design and implementation was a critical consideration that tipped the scales in the favor of Windows 2000.

Benchmarking

At the time, the required solution would operate at a larger scale than any other implementation of SAP on Windows 2000, so planning infrastructure on this scale required a groundbreaking benchmark study to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed solution. The benchmark alone was four to five times larger than any previous such study. Test centers in the United States and Australia were pressed into service to produce a highly accurate simulation of the loads that the CRM application would experience in the future.

Testing

With the knowledge gained during the test, Avanade designed the infrastructure to run the actual application, plus a testing process to ensure performance meets desired levels. Commencing at the individual-program level, the test process built one layer at a time to finally include entire end-to-end processes in a simulated business environment with real data and real end users. While these tests were being executed, problem areas were identified and resolved prior to the go-live phase. Even the go-live was phased, with a small section of customers initially and then building up to the full customer database within five months.

The Solution: SAP Applications Running on Windows 2000 Server

The new CRM system runs solely on Windows 2000 Server, using a fleet of identical server clusters that provide processing power plus business continuity features. The setup also scales: new clusters can almost literally be "plugged in" to add processing power or the ability to run new SAP applications and take on new business processes. Work can even be transferred from server to server to take advantage of computing resources as – and when – they become available.

Microsoft's Active Directory is also employed to define the system capabilities – setting out who is a registered user, what access that person may have to file servers, what printers are available, and so on. This "sign on" environment offers a fluidity of control that enables the utility to operate with tremendous agility.

Customer Interaction in Real Time

As part of the solution, Avanade also constructed more than 60 specific interfaces for handling communication with third parties, allowing the customer to interact in real time with banks, collection agencies, and other agencies in order to give their own customers multiple payment options. Avanade delivered this functionality using Microsoft's BizTalk Server 2000, creating a billing system that could process inputs from several sources without ever pausing for batch processing.

The solution goes beyond the technical, too. Avanade helped train the customer's IT team, imparting knowledge they would need to operate and evolve their infrastructure as the company and its customers' needs change. ■



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 - Conferences
 - Expositions
 - Visits from solution providers
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