

## Transformation with Microsoft Business Solutions: Great Plains and CRM

Avanade helped Maryland-based energy solution provider BGE HOME transform its business operations with Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains and Microsoft CRM in a matter of months. Microsoft BizTalk Server provides a seamless integration between the two MBS applications and with the systems of parent company Constellation Energy. BGE Home has moved from siloed operations on multiple applications to a standardized platform with a consistent set of processes across its many business units. With the support of the new system, BGE HOME is now rolling out new lines of business, expanding into new markets while staying in touch with the needs of its growing customer base.



▲ BGE HOME provides a wide range of energy-focused products and services for residential and small commercial customers in Maryland. Among these services are their offerings of heating and air conditioning equipment, appliance maintenance, plumbing systems, electrical systems, natural gas, and energy-related home improvements. In all, the company operates eight distinct lines of business. BGE HOME is a member of Constellation Energy Group, a Fortune 500 energy company and the nation's leading competitive supplier of electricity to large commercial and industrial customers.

### ▶ SNAPSHOT

<b>Industry</b>	Resources	<b>Previous Platform</b>	Heterogeneous and home-grown with unique applications for each line of business	<b>Team</b>	Avanade: 3 onshore, 3 offshore (Bangalore)
<b>Geography</b>	US East				Accenture: 2
<b>Technology</b>	Microsoft Great Plains; Microsoft CRM; Microsoft BizTalk Server 2004				BGE HOME: 1 project manager, 3 IT staff, 6 business managers

## Situation

Heterogeneous mix of applications limited BGE HOME's ability to grow in an expanding, newly unregulated energy environment and made it difficult for BGE HOME to share information with its parent company

With the deregulation of the energy market moving toward completion, the opportunities for BGE HOME were expanding. BGE HOME has always operated in the unregulated sector of the market, supplying home comfort energy solutions to residential and small commercial customers. When these customers would become free to choose their gas and electricity suppliers, BGE HOME wanted to be ready to serve as the supplier of choice.

The company's operating systems, however, were not in a state that would allow the company to support an influx of new customers and service lines. Multiple disparate systems tracked day-to-day activities for the various product lines and functional groups. Any data mapping and integration among product lines had to be performed with manual reentry of data.

Likewise, performance reporting to its parent company, Constellation Energy Group, was a slow and labor intensive effort that limited both companies from gaining timely insight into BGE HOME's financial state. Mary Joe Barranco, BGE HOME's chief financial officer, explains, "We started looking at a new solution in response to the demand for financial information and the speed with which we needed to provide that data, both to our corporate parent as well as to our operating groups. As we've grown as a company, we've operated on two separate financial systems, three separate inventory systems, and we did all of our financial reporting with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. We were very challenged to meet the continuous requirements that were being placed on us in that environment."

To prepare for growth and facilitate the exchange of information with Constellation, BGE HOME wanted to retool its application portfolio with a tightly integrated suite of business applications. The goals established for the new system would benefit both companies. BGE home would be better prepared to support growth and gain faster, more accurate reporting capabilities. The ability to exchange information easily between the two companies' systems would give both better insight into BGE HOME's financial state.

BGE HOME's vision for the system included a homogenous, integrated environment — yet one with the flexibility to meet the unique requirements for each of its eight business lines. The company identified several capabilities that would allow it to expand while continuing to provide excellent service. These included increased capacity to handle a growing number of customers, more effective billing systems, better insight into customer needs, more responsive deployment and tracking of service technicians, and the flexibility to add service offerings as the company expanded into new lines of business. Clearly these goals called for an enterprise-wide solution.

### ▶ QUOTE

"As we've grown as a company, we've operated on two separate financial systems, three separate inventory systems, and we did all of our financial reporting with Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. We were very challenged to meet the continuous requirements that were being placed on us in that environment."

**Mary Joe Barranco**  
Chief Financial Office  
BGE Home

## Solution

Avanade leads implementation to transform the business in just 18 months

---

BGE HOME called on Accenture, a long-time partner with Constellation, for help. By networking with other energy companies facing similar challenges, BGE HOME and Constellation identified two Microsoft Business Solutions — Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM — among its choices for supporting finance and marketing. Immediately recognizing the opportunity that Microsoft Business Solutions offered, the decision was made to forego the vendor selection process and move directly to a fitness assessment focused on these two products, with Microsoft BizTalk as the integration framework.

Accenture turned to Avanade and Microsoft to build the team to support BGE HOME's transformation. Avanade, with its experience and deep knowledge of Microsoft enterprise technology, led a fitness assessment. The results demonstrated that integrating Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM for a common business operating platform and a common repository of information would deliver on the company's two overarching goals:

### ▶ QUOTE

"The team helped us lay out the strategy and road map, and they broke it down into phases that we could then execute very quickly."

**Michael Fowler**  
Project Manager  
BGE Home

- ➔ Support the complex and growing multi-product and multi-service environment at BGE HOME
- ➔ Communicate effectively with the enterprise systems of Constellation, the parent company

Avanade proposed a phased delivery approach to provide BGE HOME with immediate benefits from the new solution and manageable changes in business processes. Michael Fowler, BGE HOME's project manager, describes the approach, "The team helped us lay out the strategy and road map, and they broke it down into phases that we could then execute very quickly, in three- to four-month chunks. We were under time constraints as well as budgetary constraints. We needed to get it right, and we needed to get it right the first time and very fast."

BGE HOME took the wise approach for the implementation. It would accept the leading practices for finance and marketing built into Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM. There would be no customization beyond minor user configurations. Instead, BGE HOME would work with Accenture to change its outdated, inefficient processes and adopt the practices built into the software.

The company implemented 44 of the Microsoft Great Plains modules, including the financial series, supply chain modules, the distribution suite and field service modules, with two modules from Customer Relationship Management — the sales module and the service module. These would replace the company's many disparate systems, including those for accounts payable and general ledger, accounts receivable, lead tracking, three order and inventory systems and a warranty tracking system. Avanade deployed BizTalk to integrate the BGE HOME website to Microsoft CRM and ultimately back to Constellation's corporate mainframe system. Avanade used Microsoft's eConnect as the middleware adapter between Microsoft CRM and Microsoft Great Plains.

Avanade product specialists in Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM led the business process redesign to transform the business operations and all technical aspects of the project. Within just three months, they completed phase one of the implementation and BGE HOME went live with the consolidation of all general ledger, financing and accounts payable functions. Four months later, Avanade completed the migration of the sales and installation business lines onto the new financial management and CRM platform for inventory, purchasing, sales order processing, customer billing and receivables management. Within the next six months, Avanade completed phase three, the migration of the entire service side of the business: scheduling, dispatch, tracking, warranty, billing, and more.

Throughout the project, BGE HOME provided the business acumen and skilled IT resources required to effectively implement the solution within the overall Constellation Energy infrastructure. Accenture provided the vision and guidance for the overall project, as



Contact us: [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

© 2006 Avanade, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Avanade name and logo are registered trademarks in the U.S. and other countries.

well as world-class project methodology and skilled business process practitioners. Accenture's strong organizational readiness experience helped BGE HOME employees transition to the new system and business processes. Microsoft, through its premiere support channel, provided detailed product information when it was required.

For Beth Perlman, chief information officer and senior vice president at Constellation, the deployment was remarkable. "I am still amazed at how quickly we were able to get in a new system. It's not just the technology piece that amazed me. We had to actually train users and re-educate them on how to use new technologies, because they'd been using very old nonintegrated systems for a very long time. I was amazed at the pace that the user community was able to keep up with these implementations."

## Avanade Value

BGE Home gains a partner with the drive and energy to match its own

---

Avanade raised BGE Home's operational performance by helping them maximize their investment in Microsoft technologies. Mike Pazak, a director within Avanade's Microsoft Business Solutions practice, explains a key cost benefit, "We were able to use our global delivery center's capability in India to help with some of the Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM development. The result is that we were able to deliver increased value to the customer against their fixed project budget."

One of the keys to the successful delivery of this complex project under such a tight time frame was bringing the right skills together at the right time. Michael Strand, Microsoft's US director of MBS, explains, "This is a perfect example of what's possible with the partnership of Microsoft's technology, Accenture's deep business solutions in cross-enterprise customer relationship management and Avanade's implementation and integration expertise not only within the MBS portfolio but across the rest of our server, desktop and development products."

## Results

An integrated system, a transformed organization, a readiness to attack the market

---

On the finance side, Microsoft Great Plains has standardized and transformed the entire "order to cash" process for BGE HOME. Mary Joe Barranco explains, "Prior to implementing Microsoft Great Plains, we really had no visibility into the manual paper processes that were flowing throughout the company. Now at a given point in time, we can access those work queues and see what is in the pipeline, what we anticipate billing within the next several days and really be able to make of projection of where we think we're going to come in for the month based on having access to that information."

Several key metrics highlight BGE HOME's performance improvements:

- ⇒ Month-end processes time dropped from 7 days to 3 days
- ⇒ Records in the chart of accounts decreased 6,000 to 1000
- ⇒ The number of accounts payable vendors decreased from 10,000 to 883
- ⇒ The number of journal entries decreased from 134 to 71
- ⇒ Retrieval of customer information and adding new customers is now 25 percent faster

Generating financial reports, which once required specialized skills for working with BGE HOME's unique set of Excel spreadsheets, can now be done easily by any number of people. Michael Fowler describes the benefits to users, "I think the most immediate value that



Contact us: [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

© 2006 Avanade, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Avanade name and logo are registered trademarks in the U.S. and other countries.

we got out of the system was giving the users independence from IT. They now can do ad hoc querying and have access to the data they've always wanted to have."

Microsoft CRM has had an equally positive impact on customer service. Through a single screen in Microsoft CRM, call center representatives at BGE HOME now create new customer records and process sales with unprecedented ease. The sales record moves immediately and seamlessly into Microsoft Great Plains to relieve inventory and initiate the billing process. Before implementing Microsoft Great Plains, BGE HOME did not have its own branded invoice and line item charges were embedded on the local utility's invoice. Now, BGE has customized invoices that reflect BGE HOME's line item charges. This has increased customer satisfaction and made for a more efficient collection process.

Microsoft CRM has also significantly improved the lead management process. Leads coming in from a variety of sources — such as phone, fax and the field — are all captured and managed with a standardized process. Leads from the internet feed directly into the system. BGE HOME has a system in place to convert leads into customers and then to support that growing number of customers.

With the new standard operating platform, BGE HOME is now able to quickly add new business lines without a significant IT or business capability investment. "As we implemented Microsoft Great Plains, we also rolled out new business lines at BGE HOME. We've just recently gone into the home security business." In just two months, using two part-time resources, BGE HOME brought this new business line onto the system, with most of the effort surrounding the business process design and rollout. Perlman continues, "Having a tool like Microsoft Great Plains will enable us to get into newer areas quickly and have the technology to support all the services that we offer."

As the business grows, BGE will also be able to add and interface with new applications. The company is now undertaking a project to replace its aging mobile system. The new system will allow field technicians to interact with real-time data feeds from Microsoft Great Plains and Microsoft CRM while on the job site, improving their efficiency in the field. The company also has the capability in place to provide field workers with digital pens to capture data on diagrams and forms loaded into both applications and to equip field sales representatives with Microsoft CRM Sales-enabled laptops.

Burrell Kilmer, associate partner with Accenture, explains what it all adds up to, "The new system has helped BGE HOME achieve a higher level of business performance. They now have the autonomy they need to run their business and at the same time provide the financial information that the corporate parent needs to manage the enterprise." By partnering with Avanade, Accenture and Microsoft, within just 18 months BGE HOME achieved its vision for enabling future growth and reporting effortlessly to parent company Constellation Energy.

## About Avanade

---

Avanade is the leading technology integrator specializing in the Microsoft enterprise platform. Our people help customers around the world maximize their IT investment and create comprehensive solutions that drive business results. For more information about our services, please visit { HYPERLINK "<http://www.avanade.com>" }.



Contact us: [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

© 2006 Avanade, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Avanade name and logo are registered trademarks in the U.S. and other countries.