Case Study

Airbus: Creating smarter ways to keep communities safe

Integrated solution for lifecycle management of emergency services call center deployments

Business situation

Airbus DS Communications, Inc. (Airbus) is a global leader and trusted source in the mission-critical communications technologies space. Its VESTA® product suite provides Next Generation 9-1-1 call processing systems, land mobile radio solutions and emergency notification applications, creating smarter ways to keep communities safe. More than 100,000 call takers interact with its 9-1-1 equipment every day to protect over 200 million people in the U.S., 24/7.

The 9-1-1 industry is progressing from telephony-based systems (land or wire lines for call taking) to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) – multi-media, SMS call technologies. “While NG9-1-1 technology offers users more options to contact emergency services, it also results in more complex business operations for service providers,” notes Liezl Wakeling, Senior Director of Finance, Airbus DS Communications.

To meet changing market needs, Airbus is transitioning from a hardware and software provider to a full-service solutions integrator, taking on complete lifecycle management of emergency services call center implementations: space design, layout and build, workstation setup including hardware installation and software configuration, and overall project management.

But Airbus’ aging and heavily customized ERP platform was ill-equipped to handle the additional complexity of its new business model. With project data scattered across several different systems, more than 20 departments and in four North American locations, it was complicated and time-consuming to gain a complete picture of project statuses. Many processes were paper-based and a series of spreadsheets was used to track revenues, costs, margins and projections. Airbus sought a more streamlined approach to tracking projects and performing revenue accounting activities.
**Business solution: Workplace goes digital with consolidated enterprise system**

Airbus selected Microsoft Dynamics AX to replace its aging system and turned to Avanade to assist in its second phase implementation based on the company’s estimating model, demonstrated deep expertise with Microsoft technologies and project governance. “Avanade was a good fit for us. They have extensive expertise with Microsoft technologies; they handled the RFP process very professionally and their bid was high-quality,” comments Wakeling.

Airbus uses an extensive ERP footprint. Avanade first completed and reviewed four Dynamics AX modules that had been initiated by the first phase vendor, then rolled out AX to the remaining 80 percent of the US operations in California, Tennessee, Texas and Illinois, as well as to the Canadian entity in Quebec. As the project progressed, three additional modules were added to the scope.

“Avanade was flexible in its approach to teeming and staffing the project, working alongside independent consultants and our own development team to integrate the ERP system to third-party solutions.” — Louis Albatro, CFO, Airbus DS Communications, Inc.

Dynamics AX was integrated with back-end systems to help with data management and to enable project team members and decision makers to access and act on information. The integration was enabled via a number of other Microsoft technologies including SharePoint, Project Server, SQL Server, Windows Server, Team Foundation Server and an Avanade-developed supply chain asset. Avanade deployed both onshore and offshore (India and Philippines) resources to meet the project’s aggressive timeline and continues to provide third-level application support to Airbus.

**Benefits: Building a foundation for business transformation**

The scalable and flexible ERP platform has enabled a digital workplace at Airbus, helping the enterprise make the strategic shift from a product-centric organization to an integrator that manages everything required to deploy police, fire and paramedic call center solutions. A digital approach empowers Airbus employees to more effectively manage complex, large-scale projects and meet the changing needs of customers.

**Integration provides greater visibility into project status, enabling business planning and management**

- Revenue accounting was formerly tracked through a series of spreadsheets. Now, with integration to a third-party revenue accounting module and Project Server, Airbus has deep insight into cost, margins and revenues associated with each customer project.

“The Dynamics AX system has given us the capability to do subscription billing and milestone billing for larger projects — something we were not able to do previously.” — Liezl Wakeling, Senior Director of Finance, Airbus DS Communications, Inc.
Consolidated data improves collaboration, information sharing and reporting

• Rather than data being scattered – with manufacturing data in one system, financial information in another and a project manager’s laptop holding information in Microsoft Project – all data now resides in one system, allowing for a single view of large, complex projects and timely, consistent reporting.

“Now that our team has had a few months to work with the new system, they are able to find information much more easily and are taking advantage of powerful downstream reporting capabilities.” – Louis Albatro, CFO, Airbus DS Communications, Inc.

Automated systems boost productivity and save time

• Labor-intensive manual processes, such as the spreadsheet printout used to track shipments, have been eliminated. Now, for intercompany shipping, a digital bill of materials is automatically synced to shipping and receiving groups, saving time and increasing accuracy of information.

Virtually every department at Airbus is impacted by the powerful Dynamics AX solution and, as the company continues to win large contracts and develop complex emergency services call centers, it has a scalable and flexible foundation on which to build.

“Avanade is a very good technology partner for us. Anytime there were issues, Avanade always made it right. They make commitments and stick to them.” – Liezl Wakeling, Senior Director of Finance, Airbus DS Communications, Inc.

Company overview

Airbus DS Communications (formerly Cassidian Communications, an Airbus Defense and Space Holdings, Inc. Company), has been serving the communications needs of public and private sector organizations for over four decades – ranging from state and local public safety agencies to corporate entities to the Federal government. Its solutions are deployed in 22 of the 30 most populous US cities and hundreds of Federal installations, and its emergency notification solutions are used in 20+ countries and more than 20 industries.

“We now have a tool that gives us easier access to information and more downstream reporting capabilities.”

– Louis Albatro, CFO, Airbus DS Communications, Inc.