

Case Study

Azelis integrates ERP, CRM and Pricing initiatives to improve commercial excellence



Microsoft Dynamics offers base for further growth at Azelis.

In their search for a good ERP-partner, Azelis approached Avanade in 2010. After implementing Microsoft Dynamics AX in more than 15 countries, the working relationship between Avanade and Azelis continued in order to facilitate further growth at this leading global speciality chemicals distributor.

Centralized Microsoft AX platform

Azelis needed to streamline all technology operations within its entities, including consolidation of all business data across the group. The company searched for an integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) to help it move from a heterogeneous IT environment to standardized processes.

“The choice for a Microsoft-based platform was a forward-looking choice”, said Adrian Jesinghaus, CIO at Azelis. “We were convinced that this platform would provide us with more benefits. Another reason was that the technologies that were part of the project (Microsoft Dynamics® AX for ERP, Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Reporting Services for Business Intelligence purposes) integrate very well with each other.”

To rollout Dynamics AX, Azelis needed to rely on a specialized implementation partner – a role entrusted to Avanade. “We didn’t just want a generalist, we wanted a true AX specialist as a partner,” said Mark Desmaele, Business and Data Processes Manager at Azelis. “Not only was Avanade able to provide the necessary expertise, but it is also a real global player and that was one of our requirements, given the multi-country scope of our project.”

The rollout was completed smoothly and successfully in May 2011. Azelis now has one integrated, uniform IT platform across the entire group. This allows users to cooperate much better and it creates far more transparency.

The Avanade team provided Azelis with great support, making the implementation a success in a very tight timeframe. Based on this successful project, Azelis decided to extend the partnership and implement Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Reporting Services for Business Intelligence purposes.

Need for transparency and measurement

Once the Dynamics AX platform had been implemented, it was time to grow and improve all systems. Transparency was needed among all the different locations in the Azelis group.

The sales and marketing teams needed tools to be commercially agile and the supporting departments needed correct data and transparency across the borders and throughout the various locations. There was also a growing need for control and adjustment at the central level.

Again, the choice for Microsoft technology was obvious as it provides an affordable and reliable platform and, even more importantly, a user interface that is familiar to Azelis personnel all over the world, which drastically lowered training costs. Keeping systems simple and easy to use gave Azelis employees immediate confidence and helped drive user acceptance.

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— **Adrian Jesinghaus**
CIO, Azelis

Keeping the organization commercially agile

At Azelis, most of the data used to be kept on local PCs, generally in Excel® reports. There was no central Business Intelligence system employed.

“Avanade ensured the deployment of Microsoft technology and set up a tailor-made Business Intelligence system. In order to receive data from the central AX platform, the BI system is fully integrated with Dynamics AX and Dynamics CRM”, explained Mark Desmaele further. “Employees at Azelis can now easily find the data they need and ‘play around’ with it, to mould it to their needs in data cubes. It is a sort of self-service business intelligence system.”

“The added value of this BI system was very clear immediately”, continued Adrian Jesinghaus. “There is an obvious inventory transparency across all locations now, which allows for increased efficiency and higher sales. This is also a huge help in complying with the chemical industry and transport regulations and provides an easy way to be transparent with the authorities.”

Today, the majority of employees at Azelis are actively using this centralized system. This is clearly demonstrated by the number of requests for training and product updates, but also the number of help requests sent to the Support Desk. These help requests support the improvement of the system on a daily basis, as user feedback is collated and converted into changes to enhance the system.

The missing link

A vital element to Azelis’ business success is the employees’ access to market data, strategic information and pricing practices. Avanade created a custom .NET application which interfaces with Microsoft Dynamics AX and CRM to ensure that all employees have access to the data they need.

“For us it was extremely important to align and optimize all pricing practices”, added Adrian Jesinghaus. “We needed a specific system to help us improve our quotation methods. How could we get all the information from the AX platform and integrate it into a simple application?”

Jointly with the Azelis-team Avanade created a custom pricing application with Microsoft .NET and Silverlight. The simple yet powerful application allows managers to manage the cost and price of products and specify minimum and maximum margin. When new quotes are created in CRM the pricing system takes into account costs related to warehousing, repacking, duties, transport and logistics to propose a price that will guarantee the target margin defined by Azelis. Any deviations to the suggested price are documented.

Business Managers can now keep an eye on all quotes and margins. Whenever the sales team makes a quote, the CRM system searches our specific database for the correct data, the results are saved in AX and all data is available through the Business Intelligence system. A simple implementation that really helps us to measure, steer and correct if needed.
— **Mark Desmaele**
Business and Data Processes Manager, Azelis

Providing a 360° view on the customer

The Microsoft Dynamics CRM solution provides account managers with an up to date 360 degree view of their accounts in a single system, including order history and client visits. The CRM system helps the account manager to follow Azelis' pricing strategy and ensures that the margin is optimally protected when creating new quotes. Furthermore the CRM system is also available when account managers are offline which enables them to effectively prepare client visits when on the road.

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Results realized

- An effective, integrated system that's simple and easy to use from day one – which is a huge improvement over the legacy of many different systems resulting from various mergers and acquisitions.
- A centrally managed pricing policy that implements best practices to protect the margin and helps Azelis to achieve commercial excellence.

- Sales representatives are equipped with a CRM system that provides an instant 360 degree view on the customer, both when on-premises and while on the road.
- One integrated ERP platform for an enterprise group operating in 32 countries, allowing greater efficiency, better collaboration and lower costs.
- A solid foundation for further growth: a uniform environment will enable Azelis to integrate future acquisitions much faster.
- Perfect and fluent integration of the ERP solution with other Microsoft solutions: Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Reporting Services including a specific .NET pricing application to keep the organization commercially agile.

Next steps

"During the past twelve months our organization has been subject to huge changes. It's very important to give us a chance to take the time to absorb and fully adopt what the Avanade-team has put in place", concludes Mark Desmaele. "However, we are forward thinkers and planners. After a period of stabilization we consider small improvements of the .NET and the CRM environment; and we aim to upgrade our AX 4.0 system to Microsoft Dynamics AX2012."

Azelis

Azelis is a leading Pan-European specialty chemicals distributor providing a diverse range of products and innovative services to over 50,000 customers operating in various industries including chemicals, coatings, MPA (materials, pigments and additives), polymers, composites, rubber, food & health, pet food, pharmaceutical products and personal care.

Through sourcing and distribution channels in every major market around the world, Azelis with its corporate service centre in Antwerp, Belgium, offers chemical producers market penetration, in-depth local knowledge, value-added services and tailored multiterritory solutions. Azelis, backed by private equity investor 3i, has a turnover of €1,200 million and employs 1,325 knowledgeable people located in more than 40 facilities in 32 countries across Australia, Canada, Europe, India and China.



About Avanade

Avanade provides business technology solutions and managed services that connect insight, innovation and expertise in Microsoft® technologies to help customers realize results. Our people have helped thousands of organizations in all industries improve business agility, employee productivity and customer loyalty. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

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