

Avanade Revives Microsoft Dynamics AX at EVS

To support its growth, more complex customer projects and an extended product catalogue, EVS needed a new ERP implementation. The international Belgium-based company decided to forge ahead with Microsoft Dynamics AX implemented by Avanade.

Background

EVS is a young Belgian company focusing on hardware and software for the broadcast industry. The company offers targeted solutions to its many customers, based on a wide range of products, including the powerful XT video server and slow motion replays server, which remain EVS's core products. Since its inception some 20 years ago, EVS's business evolved from simple product moving to complex project management. "As we are addressing new market segments, project management will become more and more our focal point in the future", says Philippe Gilbert, IS Manager at EVS. Today, the company has about 500 employees, working from the headquarters in Seraing, or one of the company's 20 offices around the world, including R&D branches in Toulouse, Paris, Brussels, Liège, Weiterstadt (Germany) and China, and distribution companies in, Hong Kong and New Jersey, USA. "Our worldwide presence always was a key success factor, from the very humble beginnings of the company", says Philippe Gilbert.

One Integrated Solution

EVS's story is one of continuous, organic growth, which requires a highly performing Information Systems platform. To replace several solutions that were in use throughout the company – such as systems to support accounting, order management and inventory – EVS decided to adopt Microsoft Dynamics AX 3.0 as its main platform about ten years ago. "The idea was to cover all of the company's needs with one integrated solution", says Philippe Gilbert, "including sales, orders, production, logistics, and more." Unfortunately, the project failed. The IS Manager recalls: "At the time, Dynamics AX hadn't yet fully grown into the mature product it is today and we didn't know how to streamline our processes or prepare our employees."

To cover the missing pieces, web applications were developed, for example to handle sales orders or delivery processes. It led the company to a fragmented IS environment, strictly divided in isolated silos. "Then, our CFO took the lead", Philippe Gilbert explains. "We knew we couldn't continue the way we were working. But we also knew we were facing a long and difficult change management process."

The Right Partner

EVS's first challenge was to spark new interest for a new Dynamics AX project. An audit of the processes confirmed that the company was in urgent need of a strong back-office. "The audit revealed that the former project had failed indeed", says Philippe Gilbert. "It was clear that we would continue our path with Dynamics AX, but that we needed a partner to support us." As the company wanted a partner with the right size, skills set and experience, EVS chose to launch the new ERP project under the wings of Avanade. "We were already successfully using the modules for accounting and accounts payable, allowing us to focus on the functionality that had been lacking for such a long time." Supporting the accounts receivable processes was key to the success of the project. "That's why we took on that field first. In the end, it's all about sales, isn't it? Having one single interface for all sales and consignment activities – including rental and leasing of machinery – was absolutely essential." Next to accounts receivable, EVS also implemented functionality to support inter-company transactions, stock management and logistics processes.

EVS went on to emphasize Dynamics AX's benefits and spread the word among its employees. "We put on a little roadshow", Philippe Gilbert explains, "demonstrating how Dynamics AX could help us in key offices around the world."

We set up a seminar to explain the ERP mindset to our managers and key employees, convincing them that we need collaboration instead of silos." For Philippe Gilbert, that is the true key to success with ERP. "The first thing we did, was explain the complete value chain of an ERP solution. For me personally, that's exactly where the whole Proof of Concept started: explaining how ERP would sustain the EVS processes and improve the value chain, globally not individually." At the same time, the company took the time to listen to its employees' questions and expectations. "That also is part of the success: listening to the employees and taking their input seriously." The other success factor lies within the relentless support of a reliable partner. "Avanade has a strong core team in Belgium", Philippe Gilbert explains, "as well as an excellent international network. Avanade brought in the competence we needed for this project, combined with the right project management and organisational structure. That was exactly what we needed, because we are a complex organization, with complex processes."

Adding CRM and More

About seven years ago, EVS started a project with Microsoft Dynamics CRM. But as it was the case with the initial ERP implementation, the project wasn't greeted with much enthusiasm either. "Dynamics CRM was introduced only for the European sales team", says Philippe Gilbert. "The other regions preferred to continue working with other solutions. Since none of them were integrated, CRM wasn't exactly managed on a corporate level." However, given the continuous growth of the company, EVS felt the time was right to reboot the CRM track as well. "It remained a big challenge to federate our worldwide sales teams, provide the best application design and implement the integration with AX."

“Microsoft Dynamics AX brought back the stability that we needed to support and sustain the company’s growth. Avanade added the competence we needed for this project, combined with the right project management and organisational structure.”
– Philippe Gilbert, IS Manager at EVS

Avanade integrated the key master data (customers and product catalogue) from Dynamics AX with Dynamics CRM, and added a Business Intelligence layer as well. We defined BI cubes for general ledger, accounts receivable, accounts payable, CRM opportunities and quoted products. As the company diversifies its commercial activities, it is important that we have a clear view on all revenue streams.” The reporting that is based on the BI cubes eventually are published on EVS’s Microsoft SharePoint environment.

“We are expanding the way we work with reporting”, Philippe Gilbert continues. “Step by step, we eliminate manual interventions from the budgeting and reporting processes.” This results in automated budgeting processes,

eliminating human error and allowing faster decisions. The new information system that Avanade put in place with Dynamics AX will play a key role in the future, allowing managers to respond to business opportunities with more agility. “All in all, there really wasn’t one specific business driver for the ERP project”, Philippe Gilbert concludes. “It all came down to the global efficiency of our business processes. That’s not something you can put your finger on. But even though there may not be tangible or measurable results right away, it remains clear that without this project there would have been an awful lot of trouble. Dynamics AX brought back the stability that we needed to support and sustain the company’s growth. We are ready for the future.”



About Avanade

Avanade helps clients realize results in a digital world through business technology solutions, cloud and managed services that combine insight, innovation and expertise focused on Microsoft technologies. Our people have helped thousands of organizations in all industries improve business agility, employee productivity and customer loyalty. Avanade combines the collective business, technical and industry expertise of its worldwide network of experts with the rigor of an industrialized delivery model to provide high quality solutions using proven and emerging technologies with flexible deployment models—on premises, cloud-based or outsourced. Avanade, which is majority owned by Accenture, was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 23,000 professionals in more than 20 countries. Additional information can be found at www.avanade.com.

North America

Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
America@avanade.com

South America

Sao Paulo
Phone +55 (11) 5188 3000
LatinAmerica@avanade.com

Africa

Pretoria
Phone +27 12 622 4400
SouthAfrica@avanade.com

Asia-Pacific

Sydney
Phone +61 2 9005 6772
AsiaPac@avanade.com

Europe

London
Phone +44 (0) 20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com

©2015 Avanade Inc. All rights reserved. The Avanade name and logo are registered trademarks in the US and other countries. Other brand and product names are trademarks of their of their respective owners.