

Diversified wood products manufacturer upgrades Dynamics AX with assistance from leading offshore upgrade partner.

- Timber Products Company

CLIENT

Timber Products Company

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Timber Products Company is one of the leading diversified wood products company in the United States.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Timber Products Company had decided to upgrade their Dynamics AX ERP system, and needed a business partner to assist them with upgrade services.

SOLUTION

Timber Products Company turned to Systems Advisers Group for outsourced Dynamics AX upgrade services.

BENEFITS

- Increased bandwidth of technical resources
- Lowered upgrade costs
- Accelerated upgrade cycle



"Dynamics AX v4.0 has been a very stable platform for our organisation."

*Kevin Tanferani
Director of IT*

Background

Throughout its 83-year history, Timber Products Company has been dedicated to providing its customers with a broad range of wood products that provide superior performance in a cost-effective manner. Today, Timber Products stands as an industry leader and as one of the most diversified wood products companies in America. Based in Springfield, Oregon, the company operates business units which touch all point of the forest products supply chain - sustainable timberlands, manufacturing of building materials, international forest products trading, transportation services, and marketing and sales.

Situation

As part of an initiative to modernize their information systems, Timber Products Company deployed Microsoft's Dynamics AX ERP system in 2004. The organisation originally implemented Dynamics AX v3.0 with a phased implementation plan, starting with their Financial Management functions, and then expanding into Sales, Distribution, and other core business processes.

In late 2007, Timber Products made a decision to upgrade their Dynamics AX system to version 4.0. While Timber Products had developed a strong internal Dynamics AX support and development staff, these resources were allocated to projects that were very strategic to the organisation. Timber Products' management team felt that their internal resources were better suited to work on critical business related projects, rather than investing their time in less strategic projects like an upgrade. In addition, Timber Products was hoping to contain the cost of the upgrade, and to expedite the upgrade progress by utilizing external resources.

Solution

Timber Products Company turned to Systems Advisers Group, a Microsoft Gold Certified Dynamics AX Partner that specializes in outsourced upgrade services. Systems Advisers Group has one of the world's largest pools of Certified Dynamics AX resources, and is one of seven approved Microsoft Upgrade Partners.

Standardised Processes Systems Advisers Group follows a standardised upgrade methodology that ensures control, quality, and repeatability for many of the core upgrade activities. This process is then modified to fit each customer's unique needs based on their internal skill sets and capabilities.

The Solution Systems Advisers Group provided offshore upgrade services, working closely with the Timber Products IT team, to upgrade the code and data of Timber Products' Dynamics AX system.

The upgrade was completed and tested in a simulated Timber Products environment at the SAG office in Bangalore, India. The upgraded code was then delivered to Timber Products as the final project deliverable.

Task – Pre-upgrade Process

Each upgrade begins with several steps to assess the current implementation and plan out the upgrade process. A study of customisations and integrations is conducted, a complete backup of the application and database is performed, and then several pre-upgrade tools are installed.

Task – Code Upgrade

Code upgrades are necessary if you've made changes to the core Dynamics AX system. A key element of the Timber Products upgrade was that they needed to continue modifying their existing v3.0 code during the upgrade process. To work around this, SAG created a plan whereby Timber Products could release code updates to SAG every two weeks, which SAG then periodically merged during the upgrade cycle. During this process, SAG removed customised code that was no longer being used, or which was no longer necessary in the new version. The team also cleaned up and merged several code layers in order to take advantage of changes made in v4.0. This work was performed on v3.0 so that a clean upgrade to v4.0 could then be performed.



Task – Data Upgrade

The data also needed to be upgraded due to changes in the data dictionary between versions. This is primarily due to tables and fields that have been added, renamed, or deleted in v4.0. Data upgrade activities were performed for Timber Products both before and after the code was upgraded.

Task – Production Environment Upgrade

Systems Advisers Group performed unit testing for all code that was upgraded. However, due to their deep knowledge of their application, Timber Products resources did the final functional testing. Timber Products then conducted the final upgrade on their live environment.

Benefits

As a result of partnering with Systems Advisers Group for

outsourced upgrade services, Timber Products realised the following business benefits.

Preserved bandwidth of internal IT resources

By leveraging the Systems Advisers Group upgrade team, Timber Products was able to put their internal resources to work on strategic company projects, rather than the upgrade, which was a less critical task to their business.

Contained the overall cost of the upgrade

By utilizing Systems Advisers Group's offshore upgrade team in India for the majority of the upgrade services, Timber Products was able to realize a lower hourly rate and lower overall investment than they would have seen by using local resources for the full upgrade.

Accelerated upgrade cycle

By taking advantage of Systems Advisers Group's Dynamics AX resource pool, Timber Products was able to expedite the upgrade process and go "live" on Dynamics AX v4.0 much faster than they would have otherwise.



"As a relatively small IT department, collaborating with SAG on the Dynamics AX v4.0 upgrade was a great fit. We were able to continue moving forward with critical business issues and still maintain the upgrade path for the product."

How can we assist you next?

Systems Advisers Group is a global Gold Certified Microsoft partner providing software solutions and services around Microsoft's Dynamics AX enterprise software system.

Let's talk

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