



BUSINESS PROFILE

OLDCASTLE PRECAST IS A LEADING MANUFACTURER OF PRECAST CONCRETE AND COMPOSITES IN NORTH AMERICA. THE COMPANY OPERATES 80 LOCATIONS WITH MORE THAN 3,000 EMPLOYEES.

BUSINESS/IT CHALLENGE(S):

OLDCASTLE REQUIRED A SOLUTION THAT WOULD CENTRALIZE OPERATIONS ACROSS MULTIPLE LOCATIONS, IMPROVE VISIBILITY INTO EACH OF ITS PLANTS AND GROW WITH THEIR BUSINESS.

SOLUTION:

- MICROSOFT DYNAMICS AX

BENEFITS:

- INCREASED VISIBILITY INTO BUSINESS OPERATIONS
- MORE CONFIDENT DECISION MAKING
- TAILORED FUNCTIONALITY AND FLEXIBILITY
- MAXIMIZED IT INVESTMENT

CENTRALIZING BUSINESS OPERATIONS THROUGH INCREASED VISIBILITY WITH MICROSOFT DYNAMICS AX

Oldcastle Precast, Inc. is a leading manufacturer of precast concrete, polymer concrete, and plastic products in North America. The company is a subsidiary of CRH, plc based in Ireland and its products are used for commercial, residential, and infrastructure projects. Headquartered in Auburn, Washington, Oldcastle operates 80 locations with more than 3,000 employees.

To ensure continued success in the rapidly changing manufacturing industry, Oldcastle needed to monitor business productivity across all of its plants and have the ability to adjust processes quickly. The company required a business solution that would support centralized business operations across all locations while being adaptable to future growth.

SETTING THE SCENE

Oldcastle realized early on that in order to be competitive in the market place it needed to keep up with technology developments to continually streamline its core business processes. The initiative started in 2001 with the successful implementation of Microsoft Business Solutions-Axapta 2.5 (now Microsoft Dynamics®). “We have a culture of modifying software to fit our core business needs and we wanted a solution that gave us flexibility to adapt to new situations,” said Bill Blyth, CIO of Oldcastle Precast, Inc. With that strategy in mind, Oldcastle was keen on taking advantage of technology advancements available with Microsoft Dynamics® AX. To continue maximizing return on investment, Oldcastle is currently upgrading from version 4.0 to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009.

Tectura and Oldcastle's relationship began in 2003 when Oldcastle was experiencing performance issues and Tectura's team was called in. Since that time, the business partnership has grown.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Over the past years, Oldcastle had grown rapidly through acquisition and expansion. The company was operating manufacturing plants in nationally dispersed locations and it became increasingly challenging to fully monitor business practices. There were few standardized procedures to ensure consistent monitoring and reporting as each plant was essentially operating on its own. This resulted in limited visibility of the business in many functional areas including accounts payable, marketing and sales, manufacturing and distribution.

“Microsoft Dynamics AX supports where our business wants to go. The solution has helped us centralize 80 separate locations to operating as one company.”

Bill Blyth
CIO
Oldcastle Precast, Inc.

With more than 50 percent of Oldcastle’s products being built to order, fulfilling orders correctly by delivering products at the moment they are required, to the right location, and to the exact specifications was critical to the company’s success.

The management team realized that in order to remain a strong competitor, Oldcastle had to centralize its business operations and improve visibility across the entire organization. “We needed a system that would support centralization of all plants to change from running 80 separate locations to operating as one company,” says Blyth. “We wanted a solution that would support this operational change and, at the same time, lay the foundation so we could continue to grow as a business.”

SOLUTION

When considering an ERP solution, Oldcastle was looking for a solution that would streamline its business processes and help to ensure planning, scheduling, and monitoring of every stage. “Planning and scheduling are key to customer service, ensuring the product is delivered when the customer wants it. When business is slow, this is easier. But when business is fast, we need to have a system in place that helps us streamline processes and only produce what we absolutely need,” commented Blyth.

Each plant was operating on disparate systems. Microsoft Dynamics AX provided an enterprise-wide business management solution that automated and increased efficiencies of processes for customer quotations and order

management through purchasing, invoicing and fulfillment, providing complete cost visibility into all projects.

Using Microsoft products across the business, Oldcastle wanted to ensure that the solution would integrate seamlessly with its existing IT infrastructure. The ease-of-use and the fact that it integrates with other Microsoft solutions, reinforced Oldcastle’s decision to select Microsoft Dynamics AX.

Having successfully integrated Microsoft Dynamics AX 4.0 into its business operations, Oldcastle is now looking to further leverage the solution’s capabilities by upgrading to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009. To support the solution internally, Oldcastle has implemented a unique training program based on a “train-the-trainer” principle. The company developed a team of subject matter experts that provides help desk services and onsite support. “Conducting training for the new version across 80 scattered locations is a challenge,” Blyth says, “but training needs are diminished by the application’s familiar look and feel. The user interface of Microsoft Dynamics AX has not changed drastically. If you know how to input a sales order in version 4.0 you will know how to input a sales order in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009.”

BENEFITS

Increased Visibility into Business Operations

Microsoft Dynamics AX has been the integral part in supporting Oldcastle’s operational change to a cohesive

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organization. Oldcastle established shared services centers centralizing many of its accounting processes including customer payments and AP invoice processing. The company has also integrated sales management practices into Microsoft Dynamics AX that allow the solution to manage pricing and discounting for its custom orders. The solution creates a single view across transactions, workflows and documentation which is accessible through role-based functionality controlling which team members have access to discounting functionality and which discounts can be applied to a customer quote. Dashboards provide continued visibility into all processes and ensure compliance with established procedures which helps guarantee accountability and reliability throughout the organization.

More Confident Decision Making

By making information available throughout the organization, Microsoft Dynamics AX provides the management team with a complete picture of the business. Not only does Oldcastle have immediate access to critical information, it can also analyze data and develop long-term projections enabling Oldcastle to make informed business decisions. “We can look at our plants’ history over the past 10+ years and see how each location has developed and evaluate how consolidations have affected each plant. Microsoft Dynamics AX allows us to take performance data, analyze it and make intelligent decisions based on the information over an extended period of time. This enables us to evaluate our performance and determine which processes need to be adjusted to ensure continued success of our business,” Blyth states.

Tailored Functionality and Flexibility

Microsoft Dynamics AX is based on a robust “out of the box” solution with a broad range of functionality. At the same time, the solution can easily be configured to incorporate unique business requirements. By tailoring the solution to its key business processes, Oldcastle is able to respond to market opportunities more quickly. “Instead of changing our key processes to fit the solution, we design our processes to do what we need them to and then configure Microsoft Dynamic AX to support the process,” emphasizes Blyth. “I truly believe that the business has to implement processes that are right for it and a software solution should support these processes. Microsoft Dynamics AX does just that.”

Maximized IT Investment

With Microsoft Dynamics AX, Oldcastle continues to maximize its IT investment through enhanced performance and scalability. The three-tier architecture and ability to integrate with other Microsoft technologies, such as Microsoft SQL Server provides the capability to easily add more users and scale the existing IT infrastructure to support business growth. System modifications are easily transferable to newer versions enabling Oldcastle to upgrade and adapt in the future without having to rework the entire application. This greatly reduces the complexity of implementation and ongoing system adjustments, reducing the total cost of ownership.

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LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Staying true to its strategy of continually keeping up with technology developments, Oldcastle is working closely with the Tectura team, once again, to drive a successful upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009. In fact, many of the original project team members from the Microsoft Dynamics AX 4.0 implementation are part of the Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009 initiative providing continuity and consistency. By partnering with Tectura, Oldcastle is able to tap into the vast knowledge and experience that Tectura provides to its customers. “We call Tectura first when considering IT purchase decisions. Their team has a more broad knowledge base and experience working with diverse customers in a variety of industries. Tectura can provide best practices and advise us on which solutions or features would integrate well within our business structure,” says Blyth.

The company continues to invest in information technology despite the global economic downturn and, in fact, because of it. “During a time when business is slower, we are able to focus resources on revisiting some of our processes and business practices. You are not going to accidentally be efficient, you have to plan for it. That is what we are doing now by optimizing our IT solutions to prepare ourselves for the next upswing,” says Blyth. “Microsoft Dynamics AX will continue to provide us with a competitive edge as it allows us to focus on running our business.”

ABOUT TECTURA

Tectura is a worldwide provider of business consulting services providing sustainable value through consulting, software and IT implementation. Our clientele include mid-sized companies and larger enterprises throughout the Americas, EMEA, and Asia Pacific. With team members in 20+ countries, Tectura applies its comprehensive industry knowledge and unparalleled experience in collaboration with our clients to deliver business and technology strategies and solutions designed to achieve their business performance goals.

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