



Microsoft Dynamics Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: India

Industry: Integrated Plantation

Customer Profile

Harrisons Malayalam Limited, a RPG Enterprises company, is a well known tea and rubber plantation in southern India. The company markets its own brands of teas such as (Mountain Mist, Harrisons Gold, Spencer's and Surya) with significant market share in the southern states.

Business Situation

Harrisons Malayalam was undergoing a business transformation – migrating from risk ridden auction process to branding and marketing its produce. To be successful in this initiative, the company also needed to streamline its workforce management, key to any plantation industry.

Solution

Harrisons Malayalam opted to deploy Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 supported by Affordable Business Solutions (ABS), in order to achieve complete business transformation.

Benefits

- Improves supply chain visibility
- Guarantees quick and easy updates
- Standardizes processes

Large Plantation Company streamlines Business operations by Improving overall control and reduction in reporting time

Reporting time and eliminating duplication of work thus resulting in reduction of cost

“Enabling a 20 percent efficiency in supply chain, the new solution has helped us achieve complete business transformation by augmenting our migration from a plantation producer to a plantation marketing company.”

V Balaraman, Vice President (Commercial), Harrisons Malayalam Limited

Harrisons Malayalam Limited (HML), a tea and rubber plantation company under the diversified RPG Enterprises, is undergoing a business transformation. The company has migrated from an agriculture produce focus to a market focus with a new brand of teas being sold under its banner. Apart from concentrating on branding and marketing, the company realised that it also needed to remodel its HR management with respect to its key workforce i.e. contract farmers. In order to streamline its operations, the company needed a business solution, riding on a sound IT infrastructure. With the help of Affordable Business Solutions (ABS), a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, HML deployed an integrated solution based on Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0. In 14 months, the company streamlined all 26 plantations; eliminated the unending labour (farmer) issues. In addition it has achieved seamless integration of all its applications and processes, streamlining supply chain and inventory management and a reduction in overall operational costs.



“Reporting of transactions through instant tracking of the supply chain has reduced the data processing workload in the supply chain by 20 percent.”

V Balaraman, Vice President (Commercial),
Harrisons Malayalam Limited

Situation

Belonging to the RPG Enterprises, Harrisons Malayalam is the largest integrated plantation company in southern India. Headquartered in Cochin, HML is a INR 350 crore (U.S.\$ 83 million approximately) company. It is one of India's largest rubber and tea producers. With a workforce of 15,000, the company produces 9,000 tonnes of rubber, 20,000 tonnes of tea and 4500 tonnes of pineapple. Harrisons Malayalam also produces smaller quantities of horticultural crops like Areca nut, Banana, Cardamom, Cocoa, Coffee, Coconut, and Pepper a, amongst others.

The company's operations are spread over 26 Plantations, six rubber factories and 12 tea factories along with a number of blending and processing units in the three southern states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Harrisons Malayalam operates its various businesses through independent divisions. These are tea; rubber; spices and horticulture crops; tissue culture; engineering and services; private labeling; Trading and Exports; and clearing and shipping.

A high maintenance and complex business model, the plantation industry is replete with challenges such as labour (farmers) issues, constant operational cost irrespective of changing weather conditions, risk ridden auction process of selling its produce, etc.

In order to reduce its dependence upon the auction process of selling, Harrisons Malayalam decided to de risk its business by marketing its own produce. As a result, it would move higher in the value chain, and this would lead to increase in revenues.

To make this happen, Harrisons Malayalam faced several challenges which it addressed. All the 24 plantations were following different, disparate processes. The company was using Tally Solutions for accounting and

a legacy COBOL application for payroll management, which was very tedious. All data related to purchase was fed into in house developed package and required substantial manual effort.

Additionally, it needed to streamline its stock and inventory management. As inventory levels were maintained erratically, there was no measurement of actual costs of goods sold. On the other hand, there would be production delays due to non-availability of material.

A complex document library and a lack of logistical insight limited the company's ability to estimate delivery times and monitor supplier links throughout the supply chain. “It was difficult to keep everyone updated on status and to provide correct documentation,” recalls K.N.Mathew V.P (Finance) Harrisons Malayalam. “Without a document managing system, we were forced to collaborate through email, and that led to version control problems.”

In effect, lack of sound processes were leading to sub optimal operations. Harrisons Malayalam needed to standardize all its processes, riding on a solution that would aid its smooth migration to become a marketing based organization.

Solution

Even though its parent company, RPG Enterprises was using a SAP application, Harrisons Malayalam opted for Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 as it had implicit trust in the solution and the capabilities of Affordable Business Solutions (ABS), a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner.

With the help from ABS, Harrisons Malayalam deployed a workflow and monitoring platform built on Microsoft technologies. The solution combines the strength of Microsoft® Dynamics® Ax 4.0, a business solution that

is easily customizable to suit business and industry specific requirements with Microsoft SQL Server™2005, as the centralized database for all applications. Multiple locations have been provided with remote access along with citrix .net reports in the intranet

Initiating the implementation process with a business study, ABS undertook implementation of one plantation at a time. The company then identified people and trained them to replicate the processes in other plantations. Given the complex nature of the operations, the implementation was completed in 14 months with the entire organization running on Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 .

Benefits

Harrisons Malayalam is able to manage its complex operations efficiently with optimal production capacities. Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 has enabled a complete business transformation of the company.

Reduces Cost of Operations

The plantation operations are efficiently managed as Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 extends accuracy in every transaction be it issue tracking, garden management, maintenance of generator sets, pumps, etc. Further delinking of production from marketing, has also helped tremendously. All this has helped to bring down the cost of operations by

Improves Supply Chain Visibility

Elaborating upon the efficient running of the plantations, Ravi Anand (Company Secretary & Chief Accountant) says, “The greatest benefits of the solution are supply chain workflow visibility and the transparency it allows us.” Workflow tools enable supply chain managers to identify problem areas

and address the problems before they begin to accumulate additional costs. “If quality control does not examine an order upon leaving the plantation, we can see that right away and return the shipment before we get too far along in the supply chain,” explains Dr R.S.Senthil kumar Head Process Chemistry.

Guarantees Quick and Accurate Updates

Critical business information is available online which enables the employees to easily contribute changes and share documents.

Streamlined online communications have reduced the volume of phone conversations and resultant delays in the supply chain by approximately 15 percent. “We can now handle more transactions with the same number of people,” says Abraham Ittype Senior Manager IT, Harrisons Malayalam. The centralized ERP solution has aided overall IT adoption.

Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 connects all critical financial, operational, marketing data with market intelligence, which allows Harrisons Malayalam to make sound, rapid decisions.

Standardizes Processes

By standardizing processes, all scope for misappropriation and mismanagement due to lack of visibility has been eliminated. One critical step has been the integration of the solution with the weighing machine. The quantity that each farmer produced could potentially be rigged. Now, there is no scope for any malpractice and all farmers get paid fairly.

Since the different plantations were following disparate systems, use of Microsoft® Dynamics™ Ax 4.0 across board has enforced a common platform, processes and systems.

Improves HR Management

The streamlined processes also helped the company to restructure its HR management; converting the employees working on plantations as 'contract farmers' making them profit centre managers and extending the profits to them. This eliminated the long unending labour issues.

Ease of Learning and Use

According to Mr.V.J.Moni kumar Section officer (venture Valley) ,Harrisons Malayalam, "Integration between the Microsoft Office, and Microsoft Dynamics AX 4.0 enables us to automatically complete routine forms, reducing the effort involved and minimizing opportunities for error."

Elaborating upon the ease of use, Mr Sabu Abraham Section Officer commented, "Templates created in Office Word and Office Excel extract appropriate data from Microsoft Dynamics Ax or the AS/400 mainframe to generate sales orders, invoices, and reports. This ability to import and export data makes it easier for employees to edit and share documents."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Harrison's Malayalam products and services, call (91) (484) 266 8023 or visit the Web site at: www.harrisonsMalayalam.com

For more information about Affordable Business Solutions products and services, call (91) (80) 4245 7 457 or visit the Web site at: www.abs.in

About Affordable Business Solutions

Affordable Business Solutions (ABS) offers a suite of business solutions addressing various industry verticals through an S+S model, offering affordable solutions to the growing SME segment in India. ABS also offers consultancy services in the areas of strategic business planning, business process consulting and business analytics. In the area of education, in addition to IT Usage and administration, ABS's Center for Functional excellence (CFE) offers education and skills upgrading courses for various functions like sales, materials management, finance and accounting or production planning, targeted at employees and executives of Indian SMEs. From 50 percent of its revenue on services, ABS expects its services business to grow and account for 90 percent of total revenue within 5 years – primarily because ABS expects its software resale business would transform into S+S services.

Microsoft Dynamics

Microsoft Dynamics is a line of integrated, adaptable business management solutions that enables you and your people to make business decisions with greater confidence. Microsoft Dynamics works like familiar Microsoft software such as Microsoft Office, which means less of a learning curve for your people, so they can get up and running quickly and focus on what's most important. And because it is from Microsoft, it easily works with the systems that your company already has implemented. By automating and streamlining financial, customer relationship, and supply chain processes, Microsoft Dynamics brings together people, processes, and technologies, increasing the productivity and effectiveness of your business, and helping you drive business success.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to: www.microsoft.com/dynamics

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics NAV 4.0
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Windows Server 2003
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2005
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003

Hardware

- IBM Blade Centre

Partner

- Affordable Business Solutions Pvt. Ltd.