Microsoft Business Case Studies Samples – Guy Nicholls

Microsoft Dynamics CRM helps a travel giant centralise its sales and customer retention

"It's all now centralised, backed up, managed, consistent – giving us control across all our brands and regions."
Alan Cox, Information Management Director, The Travel Corporation

Established in the 1940s, The Travel Corporation is a highly successful international travel group with 24 award-winning brands and a turnover of about £2 billion. It operates in 60 countries and has over 35 offices with more than 4,000 team members serving over 1 million customers a year.

Extraordinary as it may seem, there was a time when The Travel Corporation ran much of its extensive sales management and customer communications on a verbal or manual basis.

Broadly speaking, the company has three types of customer: the travel agent, the consultant and the consumer or end user who actually gets to go on the trip.

Business needs
It was a major challenge for The Travel Corporation to know what its agents and consultants were working on and how they were getting on – vital information to help The Travel Corporation run its business smoothly, generate revenue and plan future growth.

"If I visited one agency four times and another agency ten times, did the sales represent a response to this?" asks Alan Cox, Information Management Director of The Travel Corporation.

As for its end users, any relationship management with customers was based around individual staff. If they left, the customer relationship – and its retention – suffered. But it wasn't just a problem of dealing with staff changes. "There wasn't any deep intelligence and knowledge about our customers," says Cox.

The Travel Corporation needed a centralised automated sales system and a customer retention system to learn more about, and care for, its customer base. No mean task, given the size of the company and its global reach.

The solution
The Travel Corporation chose Microsoft Dynamics CRM to reorganise and run its sales management and customer retention operations. There are 500 users within the company.

"We started in 2006 with CRM 3.0 with a business-to business element for our sales managers – where they could assign agencies and agents to territories so they could start to record details of their activities and produce sales and management reports to understand the activities of the agents and agencies in their area," Cox explains.

He continues, "Nowadays, we're on CRM 4.0 and we've recently implemented centralised tools for our sales managers and customer service teams so we could better handle customer feedback and act accordingly. We had centralised complaints, praise and customer service issues and increased awareness of these amongst sales managers so they were fully briefed before meeting customers – great for customer care."

Microsoft Dynamics CRM also enabled a centralised dashboard for the executives so they could see sales figures and management information at a glance – broken down however they wanted.

Finally, the company used Microsoft Dynamics CRM to build a lead management system and gain a better understanding of the customer journey.

Benefits

Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics CRM, The Travel Corporation was able to easily understand who its top-selling agents and agencies were around the world and what kinds of products they were selling year-on-year, using which brochures and sales tools. The company also got comprehensive sales and management reporting and tracking systems.

Crucially, Microsoft Dynamics CRM helped The Travel Corporation get to know its customers better.

Centralised sales and management information
"It's all now centralised, backed up, managed, consistent – giving us control across all our brands and regions," says Cox. He continues, "We could understand behaviours and trends and start to recognise people who were doing repeat business with us, across all our types of customers… and then we were able to tailor future correspondence and activities accordingly."

Better customer service
"We can now send out personalised emails to customers about their trip, co-branded with our agent. This makes us all look good, and it's a better experience for customers," Cox explains, "and our analytics show better deliverability and improved open rates."

Better decision making
Gone are the days of tired data that isn't as accurate and timely as it could be. As for the sales teams, they've become a more effective force, with lots of information at their fingertips to help them plan and make informed decisions about which customers to see and what to say to them.

New staff get up to speed fast
"Using CRM, replacement staff are able to pick up on the recent customer history and quickly understand where everything's at," says Cox. This means more efficient sales visits and improved customer experience.

More information for better management
With better visibility of team and team member activities, managers can react more effectively to personnel changes and issues.

More flexible sales management
As managers find it easier to assign agencies to tasks or campaigns using a set of assignment rules, they can be more efficient and spend less of their time on admin.

Better customer profiles
"We can better understand our customers' activity, their behaviour, their preferences – and we can customise and tailor communications and activities with them accordingly," says Cox.

Easier navigation
With Microsoft Dynamics CRM, it's easy to find your way around the system.

"We've got accounts we use for travel agencies, contacts for consultants and consumers. And, when you go into one of these entities, you can see all related info, such as bookings they've made and brochures they've ordered," says Cox.

Better sales forecasting
The Travel Corporation's main planning now takes place on an annual basis and is then constantly and easily updated.

"We can look over the year's production, set targets at a territory or key partner level and then monitor progress towards those targets," says Cox.

Better time and travel planning
Integration with Microsoft Street and Trips for itinerary issues, such as route planning and mileage, is easy, saving time and energy.

Better lead management

"We can now get customer feedback and immediately point it to the agent who has a relationship with that customer," says Cox.

Better view of campaign strategies' ROI

"It's now so much easier comparing the cost of executing a DM piece or campaign and then running a report to see who booked as a result. This intelligence is allowing us to begin to improve our segmentation strategies," says Cox, concluding, "and we know our customers better".

Twitter (140)

Find out how Microsoft Dynamics helped a travel giant centralise sales and improve customer retention. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)

Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, The Travel Corporation got deep intelligence and knowledge. Crucially, it got to know its customers better.

"We can better understand our customers' activity, their behaviour, their preferences – and we can customise and tailor communications and activities with them accordingly," says Cox, Information Management Director, The Travel Corporation.

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary

[If heading needed: **travel giant centralises sales and boosts customer retention**]

The Travel Corporation needed centralised control across all its brands and regions, no mean task given the size of the company and its global reach.

The solution was Microsoft Dynamics CRM. "Nowadays," Cox explains, "we're on CRM 4.0 and we've recently implemented centralised tools for our sales managers and customer service teams." The company has also used Microsoft Dynamics CRM to build a lead management system and gain a better understanding of the customer journey.

Benefits

Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics CRM, The Travel Corporation was able to easily understand who its top-selling agents and agencies were, what kinds of products they were selling, and using which sales tools. The company got comprehensive sales and management reporting and tracking systems and, crucially, it got to know its customers better.

"We had centralised complaints, praise and customer service issues and increased awareness of these amongst sales managers so they were fully briefed before meeting customers – great for customer care," Cox concludes.

Read the full story at <url>

Microsoft Dynamics NAV helps software provider understand its cost base for rapid growth

"One of the big risks of a company growing as quickly as us is that, if you grow too quickly, you don't understand your cost base – that's not going to happen now we have NAV. I think the future is very bright."
Andrew Murphy, CEO, Sláinte Healthcare

Founded in 2006, Sláinte Healthcare is a rapidly expanding provider of technology and services to the acute healthcare sector. Headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, and with a presence in UK, the Middle East, the USA, Australia and Asia, Sláinte helps hospitals maximise their clinical and operational performance through the use of its technology platforms.

Business needs
Sláinte grew rapidly in seven years, from being a local Dublin company with one employee to an international organisation with over 70 employees, across six countries. To maintain this growth, it needed fast and accurate account information so it could make the necessary rapid investment, sales and marketing decisions.

Ongoing investment decisions were based on profitability by product – and, to make informed decisions, the software company needed product-by-product, month-by-month analysis.

Also, as an international organisation, Sláinte needed a robust accounting solution that could easily manage accounts across countries and currencies, saving time on doing it all manually.

The solution
Sláinte chose Microsoft Dynamics NAV. Not only could the system do everything Sláinte wanted, it's also future proof and can grow with the company and any new demands.

Sláinte also liked that Microsoft Dynamics NAV is so easy to set up.

"I was very pleasantly surprised at how easy it all was. The rapid-start functionality of NAV 2013 is great," says Andrew Murphy, CEO, Sláinte Healthcare. He continues, "When you look through the set-up list, it looks as if it would all take a long time but, because of the usability of the system, it all went far smoother than we ever expected."

Sláinte chose Microsoft partner Ciall to implement the new system.

"Not only do they have the technical capability, but also their principals are chartered accountants. They understand all the nuances within business, and Ciall runs its own business using NAV. That gives a lot of comfort for me," says Murphy, adding, "I cannot praise Ciall enough. I thought they were incredible to work with."

Benefits
By investing in Microsoft Dynamics NAV, Sláinte has a leading-edge, multi-faceted, scalable platform, which gives the reassurance and confidence needed for fast growth.

Excellent integration
Microsoft Dynamics NAV gives Sláinte full desktop integration with most Microsoft applications, including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft OneNote and Microsoft Sharepoint. Microsoft Dynamics NAV also integrates easily with SQL.

"NAV is the right product for Sláinte as they grow into additional territories or where their function requirements change… it'll meet their requirements," says Microsoft partner Ciall's Michael Horgan.

Easy to learn and use
A fast-growing company recruits fast. And new people need to pick things up fast so as not to hold up progress.

"One of the big benefits we've seen with NAV is how quickly people got up to speed with using the system," says Murphy.

Easy customisation
Because Microsoft Dynamics NAV is customisable, you can set things up the way you want them. This helps the Sláinte teams work more efficiently and it increases well-being and job satisfaction.

"You can make it do what you want really easily... I can do a lot on one screen, so I can get my information into my accounts very quickly," explains Susan Ryan, Financial Controller at Sláinte.

Easy accounts control
As an international company, it's very important for Sláinte to get fast, accurate overviews of its financial situation at any time.

"With NAV, I can see at the click of a button the accounts for the group, the UK, our Abu Dhabi office and our Australian office without any real effort whatsoever," says Murphy.

Better decision making
Sláinte has big investment decisions to make all the time on research, development, sales and marketing budgets. Its people now have all the information they need on hand, at any time, in any of their offices.

"We've doubled in size every year for the last five years and, if we're going to do that for the next five years, access to information to allow us to make really critical decisions on a fully informed basis is really important. We can do that now because we have Dynamics NAV 2013," says Murphy.

Increased confidence
When you're growing fast, you need a clear view of what's working and what isn't.

Murphy explains: "Profitability by product is very important – we can see profit month-by-month on a product-by-product basis... and this gives us confidence to keep up that investment."

Less administration, more time savings
Sorting out employer returns and related transactions used to be a major time-consuming challenge for this international company. Not any more.

"In Ireland, we have to file P30 employer returns once a month; it's P32 in the UK and something else elsewhere. All these filings have strict time limits. With NAV, we can automate the filing and that takes out a huge amount of manual effort," says Murphy.

He goes on, "I want people focusing on their core job and not have them tied up on a lot of administration... not filling out timesheets that need to be emailed around."

More efficient billing
Paying bills is easy with Microsoft Dynamic NAV.

As James Heslin, Client Services Manager at Sláinte, points out, "You just select the company that you're going to bill from your drop-down, and put in the times there and then. It's great to have it all there in front of you. There's a huge difference in the time being spent."

Easy, automatic currency conversion
Being able to report activities in different currencies is good for Sláinte. Before Microsoft Dynamic NAV, Sláinte had to convert everything into the euro every month. This would cause a problem at the end of the year because the company had to reconcile all these currency changes.

Now, though, it runs in different currencies for different clients for different territories – and all this is handled seamlessly by NAV. "I think the future is very bright," concludes Murphy.

Twitter (140)
Find out how Microsoft Dynamics helped a software provider understand its cost base for rapid growth. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Sláinte Healthcare gained the leading-edge, multi-faceted, scalable platform it needed for rapid growth.

"One of the big risks of a company growing as quickly as us is that, if you grow too quickly, you don't understand your cost base – that's not going to happen now we have NAV. I think the future is very bright," says Andrew Murphy, CEO, Sláinte Healthcare.

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary
[If heading needed: **Healthcare company understands its cost base for rapid growth**]
To maintain its growth, Sláinte Healthcare needed fast and accurate account information so it could make the necessary rapid investments, sales and marketing decisions.

The solution was Microsoft Dynamics NAV. Not only could the system do everything Sláinte wanted, it's also future proof and can grow with the company and any new demands. It's easy to set up, gives Sláinte full desktop integration with most Microsoft applications and integrates easily with SQL.

Benefits
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Sláinte Healthcare now has a leading-edge, multi-faceted, scalable platform, which gives the reassurance and confidence needed for fast growth.

"We've doubled in size every year for the last five years and, if we're going to do that for the next five years, access to information to allow us to make really critical decisions on a fully informed basis is really important. We can do that now because we have Dynamics NAV 2013," says Andrew Murphy, CEO, Sláinte Healthcare.

Read the full story at <url>

NAV integrates multiple supply chains to drive profit for a fresh fruit provider
or
NAV helps a fresh fruit provider say goodbye to paper trails and hello to big profit

"It's not just the quality of the information, it's the speed of the information."
Robin Dawson, Group Finance Director, Poupart

The Poupart group of companies sells fresh fruit to most of the main supermarkets in the UK, such as Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and ASDA.

To achieve a significant increase in productivity and profit, Poupart knew it needed to take better control of the way it handled its data and communications with its suppliers and customers. It needed a better, faster system to cope with massive amounts of information.

The group trebled its turnover, and so much more, thanks to Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

Processing a vast quantity of information efficiently isn't just a very important part of Poupart's business – it *is* their business.

"We don't own any warehouses. We don't own trucks. We don't own trees. Our business is about information. Dynamics NAV gives us that information. It has been a success story for us and that success is going to carry on. It's part of our DNA," says Poupart Group Finance Director, Robin Dawson.

Business needs
Poupart was suffering from too much paperwork. They needed a more efficient, faster way to collect and collate information from farmers about what they've picked and when the fruit was due to arrive in the UK for onward distribution to the supermarkets. They needed a robust logistics planning system that fully integrated with their existing Microsoft systems.

And they needed things to happen automatically – from delivery to invoice within 24 hours, ideally paper-free.

Solution
Poupart works with thousands of the best fruit growers in the world. The group feeds demand from supermarkets to these growers who respond with yield estimates. Poupart then takes these forecasts and arranges packing, transport and delivery.

Microsoft supplier Tectura helped Poupart introduce Microsoft Dynamics NAV to integrate every step of this supply chain into an efficient and cost-effective paperless system within which Poupart could monitor and manage all operations and profitability in real time – at the touch of a button.

"Tectura understand a lot of the way our business works so, when we explain quite a complex business problem, they find it easy to translate it into an actual programming solution. We find them not only easy to deal with but they also cut out a lot of the business speak and business terminology," says Matthew.

Benefits
The biggest benefit of switching to NAV was the trebling of turnover, with only one or two extra people in the administrative team. But there other huge advantages, thanks to NAV.

Efficient, electronic, paperless transactions
Everyone in the supply chain is integrated with NAV – growers, transporters, packers and customers. They each log in to a web-based interface to see what's needed and report back to Poupart with a yield forecast. Even customers send delivery receipts and receive invoices electronically.

Such efficiency means Poupart can handle so many more transactions, and benefit from clearer communication with growers – giving Poupart better intelligence when forecasting supply volumes and prices with the supermarkets. This greater level of accuracy enables greater traction with the customers.

Significant productivity increase
Electronic integration with suppliers and customers and automated routines has allowed Poupart to increase turnover by 300% whilst adding only two new administration staff.

Increasing profit
As well as the profit generated from the productivity gains, NAV is also able to help Poupart identify small amounts of wasted cost (e.g. proportional costs for different-sized deliveries) and fix the problem. In a market where margins are tight, every little bit helps.

Easily accessible and accurate information – live
With information being the lifeblood of the group, it's vital to be able to understand clearly and react quickly to demand and supply information at an individual farm or supermarket level, then to monitor and adjust pricing and volumes accordingly.

NAV holds all the information about all transactions and forecasts and is live. If you need to know something, you can find out about it straightaway. This changes the way people think about things. Firstly, it gives them certainty, which saves time. Secondly, better quality information means better decisions. Thirdly, customer and supplier queries can be acted on right away, which improves relationships. In all, the immediacy of the data makes everyone more proactive: they can have a thought about a process or problem and get hard information right away. So the problem is identified or proven not to exist. The whole culture changes.

"The tremendous power of NAV for me is its ability to drill down to the lowest level, to understand what's happening from the farm to the customer. It's not just the quality of the information, it's also the speed of the information," says Robin.

He continues, "And if questions come up, we can answer with a few clicks of the mouse. That's the power of NAV, which is fantastic for us."

Easy to use
Because NAV is a member of the Microsoft family, staff found the new system familiar and really easy to pick up. Very little extra training on the new system was needed.

"NAV 2013 fits in well with the other Microsoft products that we have within the business. They all gel together seamlessly so all the integration is already built in to the package," says Matthew Butlin, Information Director, Poupart Group.

And everyone gets their own home screen, with the options and dashboard that are relevant to what they do most – so it's right in front of them, making it much quicker to do anything.

Live data exchange with Excel
People – especially finance people – like to play with spreadsheets. With NAV 2013, you can copy data straight into Excel and manipulate it. When you come back later, you can click to 'refresh' and the source number will update from NAV. This saves so much time and allows people to work the way they want. Added to this, you can plan a forecast in Excel and then paste these figures directly into NAV, thus using Excel as your preferred data entry system.

Easy integration
Microsoft's suite integrates out of the box so there's no time spent making this happen and maintaining it, especially when there are software updates. In other systems, this can cause major headaches, but Microsoft makes sure that the whole suite works together as it evolves.

In concluding, Robin says, "There's no point in having fantastic quality information if it takes you two weeks to get there. We now have that information at our fingertips – thanks to NAV."

Twitter (140)
Microsoft Dynamics NAV played a big part in Poupart's 300% growth and helped Poupart take better control of its data and communications. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)
To increase profit, Poupart group needed to take better control of its communications. It needed a better, faster system.

The group trebled its turnover thanks to Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

"Our business is about information. Dynamics NAV gives us that information. It has been a success story for us and that success is going to carry on," says Poupart Group Finance Director, Robin Dawson.

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary
[If heading needed: How Poupart increased productivity by 300%]
To achieve a significant increase in productivity and profit, the Poupart group knew it needed to take better control of the way it handled its data and communications with its suppliers and customers. It needed a better, faster system to cope with massive amounts of information.

The group trebled its turnover, and so much more, thanks to Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

Processing vast amounts of information efficiently isn't just a very important part of Poupart's business – it *is* their business.

"We don't own any warehouses. We don't own trucks. We don't own trees. Our business is about information. Dynamics NAV gives us that information. It has been a success story for us and that success is going to carry on. It's part of our DNA," says Poupart Group Finance Director, Robin Dawson.

Read the full story at <url>

Microsoft Dynamics and AX NAV can help a council retain staff and serve customers better

"The opportunities for shared data collection and retrieval from all areas of responsibility will result in clearer financial control for the council."
Neville Cannon, Title, Plymouth City Council

Plymouth City Council manages 13,000 staff and runs between 200 and 300 services in Plymouth.

Leaving aside the vast range of its responsibilities and the constant challenge to provide the best possible customer service to Plymouth's diverse population, the council has struggled to manage multiple data bases on multiple applications – and therefore struggles to communicate efficiently and effectively with its partners.

"We can work better with our public sector partners if we can start to standardise the applications and the technology that we use," says Title at Plymouth City Council, Neville Cannon, and this is where Microsoft Dynamics and AX NAV will help.

Business needs
Plymouth City Council has two main problems getting in the way of improving its service.

The first is in finding specialised staff.

"Plymouth is kind of geographically separated from the UK. So we don't have a motorway past Exeter and, if the airport's closed, we've got a train ride of over three hours. For us, trying to get people with the right skills is just too difficult. In a city like Plymouth, we can work better with our other public sector partners if we can start to standardise the applications and the technology that we use," says Neville.

The second problem is customer service, which has been stuck in a rut and is unlikely to get any better unless the council can develop a more streamlined, standardised system.

"Our two to three hundred different services, ranging from street lighting to benefits, council tax, environmental health and trading standards, all involve customer interactions and we get millions of them every year. And they can vary quite dramatically, so, again, the more we can standardise what we're asking, how we do it and how we reuse that information, the more we can cut down on the 40, 50 or 60 different databases that all have customer names and addresses. What we're trying to do is make it easier to deliver a really good service," says Neville.

Solution
Plymouth City Council needs:
- ✓ a better, shared, understanding among all areas of the public sector
- ✓ applications and sectors that can 'talk' clearly to each other
- ✓ an easy-to-collate single data base
- ✓ lower maintenance and contract costs

The council needs a new technology stack that can help public sector partners work better together. Plymouth has some big social problems, such as a 16-year life expectancy gap between the east and west of the city. Dealing with issues like this requires public sector stakeholders – across, for example, social care, health, housing, police – to communicate more easily to enable meaningful outcomes.

"The better we can share information, the more able we are to talk the same language, and moving information around rapidly helps," explains Neville.

Microsoft suppliers KPMG and e2e are helping the council and its partners switch to Microsoft Dynamics and AX. "Both have worked very hard and been supportive. It's hard to see how it could work without them," says Neville.

Benefits
Dynamics and AX are helping the council move forward on a bigger and wider scale, making their aspiration to be a centre of excellence a real possibility.

Better skills resource
By encouraging all areas of the council and its partners to use a Microsoft infrastructure, their collective need for Microsoft specialists will mean that they recruit and develop relationships with these specialists and this will lead to a greater number of technologists and a higher level of skill in the Plymouth area. It's also good for the council as partners will be able to share knowledge and help each other more readily.

Helping solve social problems
The public sector needs to come together and work in concert to reduce social problems. The Microsoft solution forms the backbone to this collaboration, developing a common resource entered into one system and shared by everyone – much less duplication and rekeying, fewer mistakes.

Increase in productivity
With fewer separate and differing systems to log in and log out of, or simply enter data, staff will gain more time to spend with customers.

"When a customer comes to us with a simple request, such as a change of address, rather than trying to update 40 or 50 different systems, we'll start with one and cascade it out under master data management," says Neville. "The staff's main stock in trade," he continues, "is dealing with customers, rather than with many other systems."

Better staff ownership
The wider systems integration that comes with AX means the council's whole product suite will work with Outlook, Exchange, Lync, etc. If staff see a problem in a system, they can find out who's available and quickly get answers to that problem from within that product.

"Staff feel a great deal more ownership in trying to solve the problems, because we've made it easier for them to do that," says Neville.

Better staff recruitment and retention
Because of the universal familiarity with Microsoft products, there'll be a larger recruitment pool from which the council and its partners can draw.

"Because of Plymouth's geography, access to resource is quite difficult; access to skilled resource is even more difficult. So the idea that we can standardise on Microsoft products and Microsoft AX across the wider public sector helps both the city and all the public sector partners in general in that we're building and expanding the talent pool available to us within the region and we're therefore helping the local economy," says Neville.

Ease-of use of a familiar, standardised system and the perceived ability to manage records and admin more quickly will also go a long way to improving morale and retention.

Better customer experience
With all council operations running through a single new system, customers will start to see quicker responses and greater efficiency.

"Dynamics with our customer 'front end' means we can improve the customer transformation, the customer journey through us, because we deliver so many different services," says Neville.

Better financial controls
The opportunities for shared data collection and management from all areas of responsibility will result in clearer financial control for the council and a better use of public resources – a win for all stakeholders.

Twitter (140)
Microsoft Dynamics and AX NAV will help Plymouth City Council retain staff and serve customers better. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)

By standardising the applications and technology it uses, Plymouth City Council can work better with its partners, find and keep skilled staff, and provide services more efficiently.

Microsoft suppliers KPMG and e2e are helping the council and partners switch to Microsoft Dynamics and AX. "Both have worked very hard and been supportive," says <mark>Title</mark> at Plymouth City Council, Neville Cannon.

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary

[If heading needed: Council will retain staff and serve customers better]

Plymouth City Council can work better with its partners if it can start to standardise the applications and the technology it uses. This will help the council achieve its aim of finding and keeping skilled staff while also providing services more efficiently.

And the opportunities for shared data collection and retrieval from all areas of responsibility will result in clearer financial control for the council.

Microsoft suppliers KPMG and e2e are helping the council and its partners switch to Microsoft Dynamics and AX. "Both have worked very hard and been supportive. It's hard to see how it could work without them," says <mark>Title</mark> at Plymouth City Council, Neville Cannon.

Read the full story at <url>

One solution helps North Wales Police solve two main problems – and increase efficiency

North Wales Police force had identified two core problems and thought two solutions would be needed – plus it was looking for easy and cost-effective options.

The first main problem was its archaic appointing system; the second was around the lack of data sharing and management. The force called in Microsoft Professional Services for a week on-site, who went on to recommend and help implement Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics CRM, North Wales Police solved both its problems with just one solution. It has been able to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in staff time when arranging appointments, while also reducing appointment errors and duplications and creating a better service to the public. It can now share information, too, by making status and reports more accessible to operational staff and seniors.

North Wales Police force's first main problem was exacerbated by geographic and demographic circumstances. North Wales is recognised as being one of the safest places to live in the United Kingdom. Serving a population of 676,000 people and covering an area of 6,300 square kilometres, North Wales Police is a high-performing organisation that constantly seeks to improve the service provided to its diverse communities. The organisation employs approximately 1500 police officers, 160 police community support officers and over 900 staff.

Introduced at the end of 2008, the Policing Pledge required police forces to "improve customer services, give better feedback, be more accessible, and engage with the public in different ways" says Andy Cunnah, Innovation & Business Development Manager, iGroup North Wales Police.

The fact is, North Wales Police was struggling to manage its main non-urgent customer interaction – that of the appointment.

It was taking staff a long time to log customer information; the information itself was sometimes inaccurate, disparate and relatively random. And there was no formal, trackable system for communicating appointment details to customers.

Time and effort were also being wasted trying to manage multiple separate appointment calendars, fixing double bookings, checking, amending, updating and reappointing.

Cunnah describes how staff would have to "go though 60 calendars and manually count how many appointments we've had and how many we've successfully made, which was a time-consuming and laborious task".

In all, it was a very slow and often stressful process, let alone that quite often customers would fail to turn up at all.

"We were looking for a system that could make more efficient use of the police officers' time," says Cunnah, "and make the customers' experience of phoning us more pleasant."

The force's second main problem of data sharing came to a head when it decided to reorganise. A number of departments within North Wales Police, including business support, finance and human resources, were duplicated across three divisions, running their own separate systems, relying on paper-based record keeping. Because of this lack of centralised data, reporting was another labour-intensive task and prone to errors.

So North Wales Police decided it needed to rationalise the three divisions into one. In doing this, it realised it had a great opportunity to introduce a better way to organise data to minimise the time spent on collating information for reports. This was essential for senior officers, who couldn't easily get an overall picture of the performance of the organisation.

All in all, there was a lot of word of mouth and paper flying around. Things were tending to be addressed on an ad hoc basis. Management needed to get a clearer view of exactly what was going on and when – at the touch of a button or two.

Microsoft Dynamics CRM changed everything. It not only sorted out the force's two main problems, it also made the whole operation more efficient. On implementation, North Wales Police was able to:

- ✓ run a centralised appointment booking system
- ✓ use multi-language appointing (Welsh–English)
- ✓ make accurate appointments faster – just five simple fields to fill in (customer detail, date, type, area, address)
- ✓ allocate appointment slots, against force-wide availability summaries
- ✓ let relevant staff know about the appointment
- ✓ email the customer and staff member concerned
- ✓ send a reminder text to the customer two hours before the appointment time
- ✓ centralise all data
- ✓ reduce duplication of resources across support, financial, human resources and training teams
- ✓ save money and increase customer service levels
- ✓ reduce paper trails – for customers and internal staff alike
- ✓ easily log details against individual reference numbers
- ✓ allocate work needed against an available resource
- ✓ track roles and tasks against owners, and monitor ongoing progress
- ✓ reduce errors and time lag on tasks
- ✓ easily respond to alerts and escalations

All this meant a reduction of 50 percent in time spent by staff tinkering with appointments. Just as importantly, it created a better customer service that helped North Wales Police force fulfil its obligations under the Policing Pledge. It also meant that managers were able to control, track and monitor operations more closely – in effect taking better, cost-effective control of their day-to-day operations.

Some of the main benefits included:

Greater efficiency, increased customer satisfaction
Because logging information is quicker, there has been a reduction in the time it takes to process calls, which has allowed North Wales Police to "improve service to the customers, both internally and externally", says Cunnah. This has resulted in increased customer satisfaction, and time savings, allowing users to increase their productivity. Officers' time is now better spent on activities other than data entry.

Single, consolidated calendar
In using a single calendar, it has become easier for users to keep track of appointments, where officers are supposed to be, and when. Appointments are managed better, and so the number of no-shows has been vastly reduced. This in turn has led to a 50 per cent reduction in the number of officers required for the same volume of appointments.

"Officers are able to report on how many cases they've had reported over a given period of time, how long a call takes, who has taken the call, who is creating the cases, so we can measure performance as well," says Cunnah.

Reduced administration, reduced costs
Administration has been reduced because logging and managing issues and generating reports is now so much faster, and less time is required to correct errors (as less paper means fewer mistakes).

The new CRM system is more efficient, costs less to operate, and has resulted in improved service levels. "Getting the automated system in place also gives a more professional feel to the whole thing," adds Cunnah.

Easy and accurate reporting, greater visibility, better decision-making
Now that reporting is driven through CRM, and all information is recorded therein, senior officers can see metrics at a glance. This visibility allows them to assess and analyse the performance of the organisation and its

components, and make strategic decisions based on more complete and accurate information. CRM also helps to eradicate process and training issues, which drives efficiency even further.

The success of this single solution in the form of Microsoft Dynamics CRM, which solves these two main problems and others along the way while driving continuous improvement within an organisation has been noted outside of North Wales Police. Cunnah states: "We've had a lot of interest from other forces. CRM is a great solution in terms of meeting the needs of management and customers."

Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Office 365 and SharePoint help a company work smarter and save money

"We are absolutely delighted that we made the decision to roll out this stack of Microsoft products. We saw an immediate positive reaction by all our associates around the world and I would very much highly recommend other companies do the same."
Bob Gogel, CEO, Integreon

Integreon provides legal, research and business support and outsourcing services to large law and finance firms in Asia, the USA, the UK and Australia. With a staff of 2,500 people, efficiency is all-important.

Business needs
"When I joined Integreon 18 months ago, I was surprised to see we used multiple exchange platforms around the world. This set-up was mainly because of a number of acquisitions we'd made over time and added to the business," says Bob Gogel, CEO at Integreon.

Using different platforms led to a whole host of issues around inefficiency, vulnerability and cost. Security concerns, worries about back-up capacity, and unknowns about scalability and licensing for fluctuating staff levels all needed to be addressed as a priority.

And to top it all, the sales team was suffering because it wasn't integrated properly. "You had to have a separate sign-on, it was a complex system – and the training of a new salesperson on the system was quite challenging," explains Gogel.

The solution
"So we went to our Microsoft partner Ciber and asked them for a solution – this was just when Microsoft had announced Office 365," says Gogel.

Ciber was able to set up an entire suite of Microsoft products for Integreon, namely Microsoft Dynamics in the cloud with:
- ✓ Microsoft Office 365 for email, office apps, video conferencing and instant messaging
- ✓ Microsoft SharePoint for intranet and document and information sharing
- ✓ Microsoft Lync for remote desktop sharing

"One of the big advantages of going with Ciber is there's only one door to knock on – and they've always been there to help. They have the ability to manage across geographies, and they're a team that can talk tech with tech people and can talk business with my business people – and that balance is very rare to find today in the industry," says Gogel.

Benefits
With Integreon's switch to this suite of Microsoft products, all aspects of its business benefited. Use of its intranet, knowledge sharing, finding people, sharing information and collaborating all improved. Microsoft Dynamics CRM drove the business forward and helped the company develop a more robust new business pipeline.

As Brian Henry of Ciber put it, "Once you consider the whole Microsoft suite of products, it knocks Google and Salesforce.com out of the park. And that's one of the key reasons why Integreon chose Microsoft Office 365, SharePoint and Dynamics CRM as an all-up solution."

Significant savings
Microsoft Dynamics' single platform meant important savings in overheads. "We estimate we've made about 15% savings on where we were before," says Gogel.

Increased productivity

Many of Integreon's staff didn't have access to the company's old system during office hours, as they were working on client systems. Now they can even access the new system using their smartphone, when they're at home or from kiosks throughout Integreon's various sites.

"SharePoint has given us a significant advantage in communication with our associates around the world," Gogel points out, adding, "It makes a significant improvement in productivity."

Better scheduling and time savings
The integrated nature of the Microsoft product suite is compelling and conducive to faster working and results. Now the teams can get a query by instant message, click on Microsoft Lync to have an instant video conference and sort things out there and then.

"This morning I was on a Lync video call with one of my staff in India. We're in the middle of a project – we shared my desktop, he was able to make changes that I approved and signed off. Normally that sort of process would have taken about five hours of back-and-forth emails – we did it in real time," says Gogel. He continues, "We had a conference facility before but it certainly wasn't as integrated into the day-to-day desktop as Lync is, so we got rid of the other provider and will probably save several hundred thousand dollars a year."

Increased efficiency
With the new system, Integreon can now deal with clients and subsidiaries around the world, and get a global view of all the different activities they're working on with a single client.

"Whether we're sitting in Mumbai, Beijing, London or New York, we'll have a single view of a client, and everybody's working off the same database. It allows us to move much faster than we could before and everybody knows what we're doing with the client," says Gogel.

Better resource management
Microsoft Dynamics CRM allows managers to get quick and easy views of what's going on across the company. They can now drill down from salesperson to salesperson, giving them more effective control of resource allocations.

As Gogel says, "It also allows me as chief executive, when I'm out in the field visiting clients, to get a sense of the overall relationship with the client. That I couldn't do before."

Better sales team performance
Integreon's sales team is now more efficient. "The sales steam actually wants to use Dynamics because it helps them manage their time better, allowing them to spend more face-to-face time with clients – hopefully earning more commission than they could before... so the reception by the sales force to CRM has been extremely positive," says Gogel.

Easier, faster training
The Microsoft suite chosen has the familiarity of Microsoft products, so the training time for both Microsoft Dynamics CRM and SharePoint versus training on other systems is almost negligible. "Obviously this is a big saving for us," says Gogel.

Flexible licensing
With so many personnel, staffing levels can fluctuate frequently. Integreon feel the licensing flexibility that Microsoft Office 365 brings is a great advantage. "The whole licensing ability around Office 365 was very, very attractive to us," explains Gogel.

More reliable system and support
Hand in hand with the familiarity of using Microsoft products comes Microsoft reliability and system support. "The familiarity with the Microsoft suite, the reliability of the suite, the support – all are for us very helpful," says Gogel.

He concludes, "We are absolutely delighted that we made the decision to roll out this stack of Microsoft products. We saw an immediate positive reaction by all our associates around the world and I would very much highly recommend other companies do the same."

Twitter (140)
Find out how Microsoft Dynamics, Office 365 and SharePoint helped a company work smarter and save money. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Office 365 and SharePoint, Integreon developed a more robust new business pipeline and saved money.

Knowledge, information sharing and collaboration all got much better. "SharePoint has given us a significant advantage in communication with our associates around the world," says Bob Gogel, CEO, Integreon. "It makes a significant improvement in productivity."

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary
[If heading needed: **Global outsourcing specialist works smarter and saves money**]
Integreon needed to replace its costly and inefficient systems, which were causing concerns around security, back-up capacity, scalability and lack of integration.

"When I joined Integreon," says Bob Gogel, CEO, "I was surprised to see we used multiple exchange platforms around the world. This set-up was mainly because of a number of acquisitions we'd made over time."

The solution was a single platform with: Microsoft Office 365 for email, office apps, video conferencing and instant messaging; Microsoft SharePoint for intranet and document and information sharing; and Microsoft Lync for remote desktop sharing.

Benefits
Thanks to this suite of Microsoft products, all aspects of Integreon's business benefited. Use of intranet, knowledge sharing, finding people, sharing information and collaborating all improved. The salespeople were more integrated, too; they could work more efficiently, spend more face-to-face time with clients, and earn more commission.

"We are absolutely delighted that we made the decision to roll out this stack of Microsoft products. We saw an immediate positive reaction by all our associates around the world," says Gogel. And the single platform means significant savings. As Gogel explains, "We estimate we've made about 15% savings on where we were before."

Read the full story at <url>

Microsoft Dynamics helps home healthcare provider increase efficiency by 20%

"Microsoft Dynamics, because it opened up so many opportunities for us, gave us a flexible platform on which we could build and consolidate a number of systems."
Martin Gunn, CIO, Healthcare at Home

Healthcare at Home was established in 1992 to improve the way in which care is provided for patients in their own homes or in community clinics. It's now the UK's leading provider of high-tech home healthcare.

Clients include the NHS, pharmaceutical companies, private medical insurers, consultants, GPs and charities. **Healthcare at Home has** around 1,000 staff across the UK serving more than 150,000 patients a year.

Business needs
Healthcare at Home's patient administration system was getting slow and unresponsive as the company's volumes increased exponentially. "It just wasn't flexible enough to basically adapt and manipulate and support the services that we were moving into," says Martin Gunn, CIO, Healthcare at Home.

The old assortment of multiple systems had lots of issues with upgrades and maintenance, and staff training on so many systems was a costly and time-consuming challenge. The company needed a flexible platform on which it could build and consolidate a number of systems. It needed a solid foundation for growth.

As Gunn explains, "Growing at the rate we had been meant that we'd built up a lot of satellite systems and an architecture that involved lots of different applications. Consolidation was the name of the game: more efficient and managing the capacity."

Solution
Looking at options, the company decided that it wanted something more flexible than Salesforce.com. Microsoft Dynamics had the greatest level of flexibility. Also, the company's IT department had Microsoft skills so, as Gunn points out, "we didn't have to bring in new skills to learn the system".

Healthcare at Home chose a robust solution in Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0 with an SQL server. Microsoft Dynamics CRM included Microsoft BizTalk as a way of managing relationships and translating between their different systems, making processes quicker.

"Microsoft Dynamics, because it opened up so many opportunities for us, gave us a flexible platform on which we could build and consolidate a number of systems… and Microsoft BizTalk meant that, in the future, we could unplug elements and plug in new ones really easily," says Gunn.

The Microsoft Dynamics solution was designed with a Microsoft Partner. "We worked with a Microsoft Partner for the architecture, but we have the resources and skills in house for the rest," says Gunn, continuing, "and because we knew the previous system inside out and our project approach was a like-for-like replacement of the previous system, replacing the previous functionality and adding more for the future – we kind of knew we were the people to do it."

Healthcare at Home's development team of eight set up Microsoft Dynamics CRM. "This in-house project team is still in place so we can develop new functionality easily," says Gunn. "Having the internal development resource gives us an opportunity to design something that fits our business model."

Benefits
One of the main benefits of Microsoft Dynamics CRM **for Healthcare at Home** is better customer service. To make it run more smoothly, the team developed scripting over the top of Microsoft Dynamics CRM to capture and contain knowledge of customers and activities.

This improved structure means the knowledge is in Microsoft Dynamics CRM rather than just in people's heads, which in turn means staff can change while new members get up to speed fast.

"The scripting shaved quite a lot of time off the transactional element of our business. So customer interactions are faster," explains Gunn. "We now have a standardised record of every conversation with customers that is standard."

More accuracy
With everything logged in Microsoft Dynamics CRM, there are now fewer mistakes. This makes for a better experience for **Healthcare at Home** customers.

20% increase in efficiency
Scripting has improved interaction with customers and reduced phone time. And the resulting automated workflow means the process is focused around structured conversations with fewer mistakes. Customer service team members now know what they need to ask a customer and can type answers directly into the system.

Gunn explains: "The system will know, for example, that a customer needs a repeat subscription of their drug and it organises it all, from ordering to dispensing and delivery. It's a one-off hit between customer service and the patient. In the old days, we would've had to manually create an order in a separate system."

More efficient nursing
Healthcare at Home used to schedule its 400-odd nurses regionally. Microsoft Dynamics CRM now has centralised nursing management records on all nurses, their competencies and all patient visits. So a centralised team can manage nurses on a national scale, with greater visibility of who's doing what.

"Previously … your regional nurse might've been hours away, when there was another nurse just over the region's border five minutes away. We can now manage by an individual's proximity to the job rather than basing who goes on a visit by which team they're in," says Gunn. And these savings in time and money mean the company can schedule more home visits.

Easy integration
Healthcare at Home is about to move to a new, simpler, mobile nursing system integrated with Microsoft Dynamics CRM. "Information comes in real time over the phone from nurses on visits, meaning we start the order process – and billing – earlier," says Gunn.

Increased competitiveness
Clinicians like the new, fast mobile nursing system. They read data though a special portal, with full visibility of their patients in home care. And this increases their loyalty to Healthcare at Home.

Rapid customisation
As an innovative company, Healthcare at Home has new service models all the time and Microsoft Dynamics CRM gives them the flexibility and agility to work fast on development.

"We've got the flexibility now to often deliver a new service provision in weeks because it's flexible and we have that skill," says Gunn.

Better future
"Microsoft Dynamics CRM has loads of shelf life and there's so much more we want to do with it," says Gunn. The home care market is changing and emerging, and that brings challenges, so astute strategy, vision and planning are needed. Having a system that's flexible enough to allow the company to react to whatever those new service provisions are going to be is really important. "That's one of the biggest benefits of Dynamics – having a system that we are completely in control of gives us that flexibility," says Gunn.

"There's a whole lot more we can do with Microsoft Dynamics CRM. It's a foundation for years to come."

Twitter (140)

Find out how Microsoft Dynamics helped the UK's leading home healthcare provider increase efficiency by 20%. <mark><url></mark>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Healthcare at Home can capture knowledge of customers, keep standardised records of conversations, reduce mistakes and manage nursing more visibly and effectively. Efficiency has increased by 20%.

"The system will know, for example, that a customer needs a repeat subscription... and it organises it all, from ordering to dispensing and delivery," says Martin Gunn, CIO, Healthcare at Home.

Read the full story at <mark><url></mark>

Blog summary
[If heading needed: **Healthcare provider increases efficiency by 20%**]
Healthcare at Home's patient administration system was getting slow and unresponsive as the company's volumes increased exponentially. "It just wasn't flexible enough to basically adapt and manipulate and support the services that we were moving into," says **Martin Gunn**, CIO, Healthcare at Home.

The solution was Microsoft Dynamics CRM Version 4 with an SQL server, designed with a Microsoft Partner and including Microsoft BizTalk to manage relationships and translate between different systems, making processes quicker.

Benefits
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Healthcare at Home is able to capture knowledge of customers, keep standardised records of conversations, reduce mistakes and manage nursing resources more visibly and effectively. So efficiency has increased by 20%.

"Microsoft Dynamics, because it opened up so many opportunities for us, gave us a flexible platform on which we could build and consolidate a number of systems," says Gunn.

One of the main benefits for Healthcare at Home was improved customer service. As Gunn explains, "We've got the flexibility now to often deliver a new service provision in weeks because it's flexible and we have that skill."

Read the full story at <url>

Microsoft Dynamics helps luxury retailer cut costs and boost sales

"Trying to get new functionality to work with our old system was a frustrating, expensive, uphill struggle. We needed fast, accurate information at point of sale for our customers."

Sam Thompson, IT Manager, Gieves and Hawkes

Established over 240 years ago in 1771, esteemed Savile Row tailor Gieves and Hawkes is the only company to ever hold three royal warrants for over 100 years. It understands the importance of customer service and customer loyalty. In a way, it was easier in the old days with one store and life's leisurely pace before modern technology.

These days, Gieves and Hawkes has 14 outlets in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and 115 more worldwide.

Business needs
The old 'system' was a random collection of different software accumulated over time that was expensive to maintain, difficult to update and almost impossible to integrate. When staff eventually got the information they were looking for, they couldn't be certain it was up to date or correct.

This system was holding Gieves and Hawkes back.

"We needed more control across the business – from shop floor to stock house – control that would save us money and improve our customer service," says Sam Thompson, IT Manager, Gieves and Hawkes.

Solution
Microsoft partner K3 was chosen for its proven expertise in the retail industry, and it helped Gieves and Hawkes identify what was needed. The solution was a Microsoft Dynamics NAV system enhanced by several retail-specific add-ons. These add-ons included K3's LS Retail module plus Lanham modules for Warehousing and Fashion. Microsoft Dynamics CRM was added to store all customer data, and an SQL-based BI cube was provided by K3.

Benefits
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Gieves and Hawkes got better, faster access to all sorts of information across the business – information that helped them control pricing, promotions and stock. But, best of all, it's been the customers who've benefited the most.

"It's great. You can have a customer on the other side of the till and know what they like, what they might like and what they've bought before," says Sam.

True integration
Because the new solution's truly integrated, there's only one version of the truth. Making decisions about sales, marketing and stock is suddenly easy, and near instant.

Scalable solution
The new Microsoft system is scalable and flexible. This makes it easy for Gieves and Hawkes to plan future growth strategies. When needed, upgrades happen automatically, leaving the Gieves and Hawkes team free to focus more on running the business and less on IT.

Easy to use
If something's easy to use, more people use it. The retail industry has a reasonably high turnover of staff so, in getting new staff up to speed, the fact that it's easy to use and easy to learn means time and money are saved. When you multiply this by every new employee in a year, it can be quite a saving.

"The new system's easy for new managers to pick up and start using – this is important, because if they don't use it they can't get the benefit," says Sam.

Easily accessible live information
Gieves and Hawkes can find out what's selling where and make decisions about ordering stock in real time.

"Sales staff get a lot of control. This makes them proactive. And it gives them a lot more confidence with customers, which in turn improves customer experience," says Sam.

Powerful, focused reporting
Staff can see any facet of the business and make decisions accordingly. For example, they can find out in a couple of clicks which colour or size is popular and order more.

"We can see how a store or sales team is doing, and help them if needed. It's all just so much more active – and it's great to be in control," says Sam.

Centralised price and promotion control
All prices are held in the new system and can be controlled by head office. So it's easy to change prices centrally and even plan them ahead. This means a problem line can be adjusted or seasonal offers pre-programmed. Staff are notified in advance, so everyone knows what's going on.

Easier stock visibility
Customers are more likely to buy something that isn't in the store if they can know exactly when Gieves and Hawkes can get it for them.

"A customer likes an instant answer, and it can help them make an instant decision to buy something," says Sam.

Gieves and Hawkes can now set automatic stock ordering when certain items need replenishing. And sales staff can tell with certainty when things are going to arrive in store.

Easy-to-target marketing
CRM makes it easy to filter records by transaction history and send only marketing that interests the customer.

This means Gieves and Hawkes is getting to know its customers better, and it reduces the number of customers who opt out on the basis that marketing communications aren't of interest.

Better service at point of sale
All Gieves and Hawkes customers now enjoy a better experience.

"The better customer experience really comes into its own with VIP customers and account holders. We can check their balance and account activity and give them knowledgeable, friendly, first-class service accordingly," says Sam.

Easy foreign exchange
Although this is only relevant to the Dublin store at present, Microsoft Dynamics NAV's ability to handle multiple currencies makes it easy to trade overseas. This feature is ready for implementation in other countries, as and when required.

"We're better placed now to better serve whoever walks into one of our stores, wherever they are in the world. Whether they walk in in the next few seconds or in another 240 years," smiles Sam.

Twitter (140)
Find out how Microsoft Dynamics helped a leading luxury retailer cut costs, boost sales and improve customer service. <url>

Facebook and LinkedIn (420)
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Gieves and Hawkes got better, faster access to information across the business that helped them control pricing, promotions and stock. But the customers have benefited most.

"It's great. You can have a customer on the other side of the till and know what they like, what they might like and what they've bought before," says Sam, IT Manager at Gieves and Hawkes.

Read the full story at <url>

Blog summary
[If heading needed: **Luxury retailer cuts costs and boosts sales**]
"We needed more control across the business – from shop floor to stock house – control that would save us money and improve our customer service," says Sam Thompson, IT Manager, Gieves and Hawkes.

The solution was a Microsoft Dynamics NAV system enhanced by several retail-specific add-ons. These add-ons included K3's LS Retail module plus Lanham modules for Warehousing and Fashion. Microsoft Dynamics CRM was added to store all customer data, and an SQL-based BI cube was provided by K3.

Benefits
Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Gieves and Hawkes got better, faster access to all sorts of information across the business – information that helped them control pricing, promotions and stock. But, best of all, it's been the customers who've benefited the most.

"It's great. You can have a customer on the other side of the till and know what they like, what they might like and what they've bought before," says Sam.

Read the full story at <url>

A single solution helps Durham Constabulary police more efficiently and effectively

"No searching multiple systems but just one screen and bang, there's everything you need to know so you can immediately make informed decisions."
Stuart Grainger, Head of ICT Service Delivery & Software Development, Durham Constabulary

Durham Constabulary (DC) had a number of challenging operational issues it needed to address and it wanted to make sure that any overhaul of their management system would be future proof without the need – and cost – of having to redevelop a few years down the road.

The introduction of Microsoft Dynamics did so much more than just fix existing problems. It helped the Constabulary teams change the way they worked, making things more efficient and adding flexibility to day-to-day operations.

Business needs
IT Head, Stuart Grainger, and his colleagues had identified four main problems facing the force. These problems reduced their ability to provide excellent policing.

The first was simply the lack of 'joined up' information. Staff couldn't always quickly get hold of all the facts relating to a case, often labouriously having to search different sources of structured and unstructured data for all the information they thought they needed. This understandably affected the quality of the decisions they had to make.

The second problem was one of increased risk. DC wanted to manage risks – not take them. Risk often took the form of making too many assumptions about cases, because staff didn't have complete information at their fingertips. This often meant a lower, time-consuming detection rate.

The third problem was that security and the ability to audit across multiple applications weren't as good as they could be. Again, this made case issues harder to detect.

The last main challenge was that of data quality, as significant quality erosion occurred when moving data between multiple systems. Staff even found that they often chose to create new data entries rather than trust a mix of old data spread across different sources.

Thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, not only were these main problems easily solved but also the force could make substantial improvements to its service to local communities.

Solution
With Microsoft Dynamics, DC was able to upgrade to a single solution that contained and ran their many applications based around Person Object Location Event (POLE, the official national model that defines how police should best record their information). Suddenly, Durham Constabulary could operate using a single data source, with versatile storage of resources using Sharepoint, and a performance dashboard to keep track of what was happening and who was doing what.

Benefits
Stuart Grainger reckons the biggest benefit to the Constabulary teams was the ability to get a 360-degree view of POLE entities – knowing everything they needed to know about cases, in a chronological order with related linking, with the added benefit of being able to access this information on a mobile device out in the field. The latter was all-important for a beat covering Durham County and Darlington's 860 square miles and population of 600,000.

"No searching multiple systems but just one screen and bang, there's everything you need to know so you can immediately make informed decisions," says Stuart.

For example, the resulting fast knowledge of any case history and threats helped facilitate intelligence and improved the decision-making process. This lead to better outcomes: at most, possibly saving lives; at the least, avoiding incident escalations.

All in all, Durham Constabulary found it was in a better place to solve problems and reduce crime.

Some of the other main benefits included:

Clearer view
With 20 to 30 partners, DC can now keep data clean, up to date and immediately accessible to all parties involved in cases. Certain partners can also efficiently add information in real time, to the single database.

Faster results
With all the information from multiple sources available instantly, problem-solving became easier, using less time and fewer staff hours.

Better risk management
In policing, often a top priority isn't headline news. So much help can be given to members of the community to solve issues before they escalate. DC's new system meant increased awareness of safety and vulnerability issues, such as abuse, helping to reduce the risk of incidents.

Better understanding
Fighting crime is one thing. Being ahead of what's happening, though, and being able to do something about it to actually prevent potential crime, means not criminalising people unnecessarily.

"It isn't all just about detections or recorded crime; it's about solving problems, often before they happen, and changing behaviour," says Stuart.

Greater mobile efficiency
As Stuart asserts: "Data quality is really so much better when you can record it closer to the time and place of an incident."

Microsoft Dynamics made policing even more visible within the community, by getting teams away from their desks and out on to the streets. This obviously helped crime prevention, too.

Better security
All information in one place was by nature more secure and accurate – to a more professional standard.

Better reporting
"With the single system, everyone sees the same version of the truth. There's no delay, and we can act accordingly, fast. This makes us more proactive than reactive," says Stuart.

Less training and development time
Fast, cost-effective implementation of a single easy-to-use system meant, from an IT point of view, that DC needed fewer skilled people to run the system day to day and it freed them up for other tasks, which helped the force become more efficient. Stuart Grainger is convinced that their new single Microsoft system has doubled productivity.

Future ready
"Microsoft Dynamics allows you to rapidly prototype, get feedback, ensure that the entities and relationships are correct, and hugely reduces future development time on your user interface," explains Stuart.

Put candidly, thanks to Microsoft Dynamics, Durham Constabulary can catch more criminals, prevent more crime, increase operational hours in the field and reduce admin time.

Stuart concludes: "Microsoft Dynamics has revolutionised the way we're delivering our service, and helped us eliminate a lot of the barriers that were there."