



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—Computer engineering

Customer Profile

MSI is an IT solutions provider focusing on a number of vertical markets. The company is based in Omaha, Nebraska, and has about 425 employees working in 10 regional offices.

Business Situation

Disparate information systems and applications caused MSI to operate inefficiently and complicated the processes of tracking customer information and converting leads into revenue.

Solution

MSI deployed a new system for managing data and customer relationships. The system uses Microsoft® software and products from Microsoft partners Axonom and KnowledgeDNA.

Benefits

- Bidding processes up to 85 percent faster
- Leads and marketing efforts handled more efficiently
- Resources managed more efficiently
- Company achieved a U.S.\$2.3 million return on investment

Axonom

KnowledgeDNA™

Customer and Data Management System Helps Maintain Growth, Increase Revenues

“The solution helps automate the bid process so that we produce high-quality sales certification submissions.”

Vince Haman, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, MSI Systems Integrators

MSI Systems Integrators is an IT solution provider that experienced 83 percent revenue growth in a four-year period. The growth, however, occurred in the absence of streamlined data and customer management capabilities, resulting in inefficiency, lost opportunities, and millions of dollars in lost revenues. To maintain its growth and capture more revenues, MSI teamed up with two Microsoft® partners—Axonom and KnowledgeDNA—to create a solution using Microsoft technologies and software developed by the partners. The solution helps manage customer relationships and thousands of documents and e-mail messages generated during a typical sales cycle. Benefits for MSI include an estimated U.S.\$2.3 million return on investment and an 85 percent reduction in the time for processing bid certifications—time that can be used for interacting with customers and increasing revenues.

Microsoft®

“We went through a due diligence process of looking at various CRM providers and felt that Microsoft Dynamics CRM would provide the best product for our needs.”

Vince Haman, Vice President and Chief Information Officer, MSI Systems Integrators

Situation

MSI Systems Integrators is an IT solution company that helps its clients maximize the benefits of their software, servers, networks, and data center facilities. The company has expertise in several specialties, including IT optimization, enterprise security, content management, business intelligence, business integration, unified communications, and business continuity.

Headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, MSI partners with technology companies such as Microsoft, Symantec, IBM, Cisco Systems, Brocade, and VMWare to provide solutions for customers in a range of industries, including banking, insurance, healthcare, wholesale and retail operations, manufacturing, and state and local government.

In the past several years, MSI has experienced rapid growth—its annual revenue jumped from about U.S.\$133 million in 2002 to about \$343 million by the end of 2006. To support that growth, MSI has 425 employees at 10 branch locations. About 380 of the employees have jobs that directly affect clients, including senior executives, sales, client project managers, engineers, architects, developers, client services, and marketing personnel.

During its period of rapid growth, MSI experienced significant issues related to the amount and diversity of information pouring into the company. Information was scattered throughout the company and within many different kinds of applications, including various databases, a sales forecasting application, Microsoft® Office Excel® 2007 spreadsheet software, and several customer relationship management (CRM) products, such as Salesforce.com.

“We had grown at an incredibly fast pace and didn’t pause long enough to let our IT

infrastructure grow with us,” says Vince Haman, Vice President and Chief Information Officer for MSI. “The result was that we had a lot of information coming in, but it all resided in poorly connected islands of automation and information. It got harder and harder for us to get the full picture of what was going on with our business.”

The disparate applications and subsequent information “islands” led to a number of problems. There was frequent duplication of data, which increased the company’s volume of information and strained employee resources without adding value. Spreadsheets with manually entered data were used to track project timelines, staff availability, and future staff utilization, forcing employees such as regional managers and administrative assistants to spend many hours compiling and sorting through information.

At the same time, much of the company’s stored information remained static and quickly became outdated, hampering the ability of MSI staff to extract the most value from available resources.

The lack of a centralized CRM system and data repository also created problems when MSI interacted with its technology partners. For example, one large technology partner requires organizations such as MSI to go through a sales certification process if they want to work with the partner on a particular customer project. The certification process requires that all documentation related to a customer proposal be submitted within a specified 48-hour period.

“The various e-mail messages and documents that we would need for a bid might be scattered across 15 different PCs,” says Haman. “Because of the difficulty of locating and compiling all the documentation for each certification, preparing a single bid

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Kevin Fratzke, Vice President of the IBM iSeries Solutions Practice, MSI Sytemes Integrators

could consume up to eight hours of sales staff time, plus several hours of administration time. We had millions of dollars of lost sales revenue because our employees were spending time on paperwork instead of on interacting with customers.”

MSI decided that it needed a solution that could integrate its enterprise resource planning (ERP) and CRM processes and information. The goal was to manage its data and personnel resources more effectively, streamline internal processes to respond to customers and opportunities more efficiently, and maintain the company’s growth for the long term.

Solution

MSI decided to create a comprehensive solution for integrating its CRM and business processes that required making major changes to the company’s IT infrastructure.

First, the company considered several CRM solutions, including Salesforce.com and SaleLogix, but chose Microsoft Dynamics™ CRM, now part of the Microsoft Dynamics line of business management solutions. Microsoft Dynamics CRM provides the tools and capabilities that MSI needs to create and easily maintain a clear picture of customers, from first contact through purchase and after the sale. Microsoft Dynamics CRM includes modules for sales, marketing, and customer service.

“We went through a due diligence process of looking at various CRM providers and felt that Microsoft Dynamics CRM would provide the best product for our needs, which included integrating with other tools,” Haman says.

MSI also needed to customize its CRM tools and install technology that could help manage and coordinate the large amounts of information coming in from its employees and various offices.

To accomplish those tasks, MSI worked with two partners. The first, KnowledgeDNA, provided MSI with its KDNA technology. KDNA is a Web-based workgroup environment built with various Microsoft software, including the Microsoft .NET Framework, Microsoft ASP.NET, and Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005 database software.

KDNA delivers real-time business intelligence to every MSI user by providing features and functions such as the ability to condense hundreds of related e-mail threads into a coherent file and audit trails for e-mail and documents. A key facet of KDNA is its ability to take unstructured data, including thousands of e-mail messages and documents, and compile that information into unified discussions, projects, and tasks. These are used to create a “master record” of key communications, which are stored in a central repository to be used in tasks such as bids on new projects.

MSI also worked with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Axonom to deploy Axonom PowerTrak. PowerTrak integrates with Microsoft Dynamics CRM through the use of add-on modules that include advanced marketing, customer and partner portals, call center capabilities, technical case management, and workflow features. The Axonom product includes the PowerTrak Forecasting Module, which helps MSI in creating more accurate sales forecasts.

Additionally, MSI installed an accounting application that is part of the Visual Business Suite. An ERP software package from VBS Software, Visual Business Suite is designed for IT solution providers and technology resellers.

The solution combines three systems—the Microsoft Dynamics CRM and PowerTrak component, the accounting application, and the KDNA activity management technology—

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to deliver a single, unified view of information to MSI staff. Information coming into the company is handled by the appropriate component and then saved in a central data repository, which makes the information widely available. For example, all accounts created and modified in the accounting application are synchronized with the Microsoft Dynamics CRM database daily so that sales staff, account managers, and others have access to important client information. Information captured by the KDNA technology is also consolidated and displayed within the Microsoft Dynamics CRM application, and all bid activities that are generated within Microsoft Dynamics CRM are automatically integrated with KDNA data.

MSI began working with KnowledgeDNA and Axonom on the comprehensive solution in 2006. A production pilot of the solution was deployed in December 2006 to a limited number of MSI users in a controlled environment for testing. The full solution went live in early February 2007 and was initially available to 200 people in the company’s 10 offices. MSI plans to make at least some of the functionality available to other company employees, eventually increasing the number of users to about 300.

Benefits

By redesigning its IT system using the Microsoft software and the products provided by Axonom and KnowledgeDNA, MSI has dramatically transformed its internal processes and procedures. The company has improved its ability to move quickly when submitting bids to its partners. It is managing internal processes such as handling sales leads and conducting marketing campaigns more effectively. The solution is helping MSI with its resource management tasks, from supervising sales staff to freeing up more time for salespeople to pursue opportunities. These benefits are also delivering a compelling return on investment for MSI

while providing a solid platform for future growth.

Bidding Processes Up to 85 Percent Faster

One of the most dramatic changes that the new solution has delivered to MSI is the ability to move much more quickly than in the past when creating detailed bids for projects, particularly with the large partner that has a strict time limit. “The new solution with the Microsoft Dynamics CRM, PowerTrak, and KDNA components ensures that the materials we need are easy to locate,” says Haman. “The solution helps automate the bid process so that we produce high-quality sales certification submissions.”

Although the solution has only been in production for a relatively brief time, it is already delivering dramatically improved results for the bid process, says Gina Morkel, Vice President of Marketing and Communications for MSI.

“In the past, we would spend anywhere from four to eight hours—sometimes more—on a bid that we would have to submit in a 48-hour window,” says Morkel. “With the new solution, the process can be done in less than one hour, and sometimes it takes as little as 20 or 30 minutes. That means that our employees can spend far less time on paperwork and more time on working directly with customers and pursuing leads that may generate revenue.”

Leads and Marketing Efforts Handled More Effectively

Morkel says that the new technology is helping MSI handle its lead generation and related marketing activities more effectively. “We do a lot of marketing and have a rigorous, documented process of conducting and evaluating campaigns, approvals, and execution,” she says. “In the past, it was all done with paper. But now we’ve been able to

add a campaigning component to Microsoft Dynamics CRM that allows us to document and archive our campaigns.”

This, she says, leads to a much more automated process of getting approvals from regional offices and business managers.

“This technology is helping us narrow the gap between marketing and sales,” Morkel says.

“We can handle leads effectively in the system and track them all the way to closure. In the process, the system helps us to determine why we won or lost a sale and how significant that win or loss was to the business. The system gives us clearer insights into the scope of our marketing campaigns and clarifies the return on investment that we get from our marketing efforts.”

The solution is also helping with forecasting activities. Using the PowerTrak Forecasting Module, MSI can build forecasts quickly and instantly view updated versions as employees enter data into the system. The PowerTrak Forecasting Module enables users to drill down into specific details, including individual accounts and specific periods of time. Users can build reports that show actual progress of opportunities first entered in Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

Resources Managed More Efficiently

By consolidating information related to leads, sales, and customer data, MSI is also able to manage its internal resources more effectively. Kevin Fratzke, Vice President of the IBM iSeries Solutions Practice for MSI, says the unification of information within the enterprise has helped MSI get a much better understanding of sales documentation and the resources available to pursue sales opportunities.

“The CRM system helps us handle the important information about customers, such as who are the main contacts, who are the decision makers, who reports to whom in a

customer organization, and so on,” he says.

“With that information, we can create documents and schematics that help our sales personnel, including teams with several people, more easily understand what they need to be working on.”

Knowing what sales priorities are is critical because the sales cycle for a typical MSI customer can stretch out over many months. During that time, all personnel involved in a sale need to be kept up-to-date, and MSI management needs to understand what personnel resources are focused on which projects.

“One of the biggest returns that I’ve experienced with the new CRM system is in handling salespeople,” Fratzke says. “I don’t have to bother them as much or spend as much time every week on the phone with them because our information is more complete and up-to-date. I’ve probably reduced the time I spend talking to salespeople by about 50 percent.”

Obtaining a \$2.3 Million Return on Investment

Morkel says that MSI’s new solution is expected to deliver a significant return on investment in the first year of use. “We project that our return on investment in Microsoft Dynamics CRM and the related products in the solution will be about \$2.3 million,” she says.

“This calculation comes from analyzing all the tasks that are being streamlined by the new system, and all the time that will be freed up for employees to pursue revenue-generating activities. The system will help us increase sales, reduce costs, and increase our productivity.”

In the future, MSI expects that the technology will also help provide a solid platform for growth. “We expect to keep growing at a rapid

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For more information about Axonom products and services, call (888) 814-2880 or visit the Web site at: www.axonom.com

For more information about KnowledgeDNA, visit the Web site at: www.knowledgedna.com

For more information about MSI products and services, call (402) 965-2300 or visit the Web site at: www.msiinet.com

pace,” Morkel says. “To sustain our revenue growth, we’ll need to do more in terms of acquiring new customers, spending more time with existing customers, and increasing sales without necessarily adding a lot more staff. The efficiencies delivered by our new system will help us do that.”

Microsoft Server Product Portfolio

For more information about the Microsoft server product portfolio, go to: www.microsoft.com/servers/default.aspx

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- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2003 Enterprise Edition
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- Microsoft .NET Framework
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