

Optimising use of Dynamics AX



Client

Swan Mill Paper Company Limited is a market leader within the paper tableware industry. It produces paper napkins, tablecloths, paper plates and cups, crackers, gift wrap and accessories for the catering and retail industries.

Goals

- ◆ Embed an IT platform capable of delivering business improvements and efficiency gains
- ◆ Improve employees' knowledge and confidence with the system

Charteris' Role

- ◆ Stabilise and optimise the newly implemented Microsoft Dynamics AX
- ◆ Train employees in how to use the solution

Results

- ◆ A stable and fully integrated enterprise IT system that delivers accurate business information and supports more streamlined business processes
- ◆ Employees who are able to use the new solution competently and effectively in their jobs

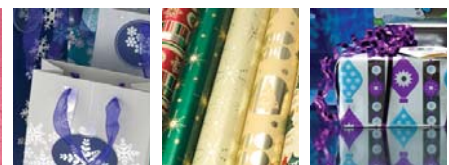
Not every IT implementation project runs smoothly, as Swan Mill Paper Company unfortunately discovered. When this leading tableware manufacturer migrated to Microsoft Dynamics AX, the initial results were unsatisfactory. Charteris was appointed to resolve a host of configuration, integration and training issues and quickly got the implementation back on track. Now, the manufacturer has an integrated enterprise IT system that it can depend upon and employees who are confident in its use.

Swan Mill Paper Company (SMPC) Limited had selected Microsoft Dynamics AX to replace its aging AS400 systems. It wanted to use this integrated software solution as a way to improve its business management and make efficiency gains. "Our existing IT systems didn't integrate all areas of our business, and it was difficult to get an accurate overview of business performance," recalls Tony Bowyer, IT manager at SMPC. "We also wanted to make efficiency savings in our warehouse processes and improve stock movements."

When SMPC implemented Dynamics AX, however, the transition to this new IT platform was not smooth, and it became apparent that the company's business goals were not being met. While all possible checks had taken place in the initial selection of an implementation partner, SMPC realised that its IT problems stemmed from the fact that its partner didn't have all the promised skills or required experience.

SMPC decided to replace the original partner, and an additional process was put into place to ensure the new partner could both provide experienced consultants and help release the potential of Dynamics AX. This process involved evaluating several different potential partners and then inviting a short list of two organisations to spend a couple of days working on site with the in-house team. "This enabled us to see the consultants in action and get a better feel for how well they would work with us," explains Bowyer.

Following this exercise, SMPC selected consultants from SIG, part of Charteris. "The Charteris consultants had a good knowledge of both Dynamics AX and manufacturing processes," says Bowyer. "In the short time that they were on site, the consultants were able to make some quick system changes that made a big difference to the business and won the confidence of users."





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Tony Bowyer,
IT Manager,
Swan Mill Paper Company



A move in the right direction

From the start, SMPC set Charteris one clear goal: to ‘make it work’. The company had had many setbacks and frustrations with Dynamics AX, and it wanted to overcome these as quickly as possible. “We had made a big investment in new technology and needed to start to see the benefits from this investment,” says Bowyer. “Charteris’ remit was to go through the whole system, fix the bits that were causing problems, speed up the bits that were slow and take out the bits that had been badly developed.”

Charteris got straight to work. The consultants developed a comprehensive plan to optimise the implementation. They checked all the best practice system settings and streamlined system functionality and processes across all areas of the business. “Charteris quickly stabilised the system and got us moving in the right direction,” says Bowyer. “Since the system became more reliable, we have seen improvements in data quality and reporting.”

With Charteris’ help, SMPC has gained an improved enterprise IT system that integrates data from most areas of the business. Dynamics AX now provides the business with the platform that it needs to help it achieve its desired business improvements and efficiency gains. “We can now produce more valuable reports and monitor Key Performance Indicators effectively across the business,” says Bowyer.

SMPC’s journey towards this success wasn’t as smooth as it could have been, and Bowyer believes that the company has learnt some valuable lessons along the way. He says: “When embarking on a recovery project of a Microsoft Dynamics AX project, I would advise all companies to trial more rigorously the short listed potential partners prior to final selection.”

A clear success story

In addition to stabilising and streamlining Dynamics AX, Charteris also organised structured training for groups of employees. In the majority of training sessions, one consultant worked with small groups of around five employees from different parts of the business, such as sales, finance and warehousing. In other training sessions, Charteris consultants worked on a one-to-one basis with key users to impart more specialist skills. Charteris also helped some in-house employees to develop teaching skills so that they could themselves undertake basic training and pass on knowledge to their colleagues.

SMPC has 115 users of Dynamics AX. Over a period of a couple of months, Charteris trained around a third of these individuals and then handed over to SMPC’s in-house IT staff, who continued rolling out the training programme. “This worked very well,” says Bowyer, “and is exactly the kind of approach that organisations need to be able to take. The transfer of knowledge from Charteris to in-house employees has been very effective.”

Working both on site and off site, the consultants provided a high level of support to SMPC staff throughout the entire project. “The consultants were very knowledgeable,” says Bowyer. “They had good personalities, as well as excellent technical and business skills, and were easy to work with.”

Through its work with Charteris, SMPC now has a stabilised enterprise IT system, together with the in-house skills it needs to use it effectively. “Our system is now fairly much self-maintained and we very rarely have to call upon Charteris for support,” concludes Bowyer. “To me, that’s a success story.”

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IT experts who think business



About Charteris

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Leading public and private sector organisations draw on our deep experience to help them improve performance and reduce costs. Our services include [Customer Centric Business Change](#), [Microsoft Dynamics](#) solutions and other advanced solutions based on the full spectrum of [Microsoft Technologies](#) and associated technologies.

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