CASE STUDY: GARDENER’S SUPPLY COMPANY

Dynamics AX helps garden supply retailer unify systems and customer views

Background

Gardener’s Supply Company (GSC), headquartered in Burlington, Vermont, prides itself on its passion for gardening. That focus enables the company to better serve its customers who also share an enthusiasm for all things gardening. “We have a triple bottom line—people, planet and profits,” said Jim Poulin, chief technology officer, GSC. “We take care of our employees. We take care of our planet. The profits enable us to sustain and grow the business.” In fact, GSC contributes 8 percent of profits to support programs and organizations that are using gardening to improve the quality of people’s lives and the health of the environment.

Overview

The employee-owned company operates across multiple sales channels, including a call center, a catalog business, an online store and two physical retail stores. “When I first came to GSC about five years ago, we did 30 to 35 percent of our business online. Now it’s closer to 70 percent,” said Poulin.

GSC was experiencing significant limitations with its 20-year-old legacy system. Over time, as modifications were needed, the company just built them outside of the system. GSC’s retail stores were each on their own system that didn’t communicate with each other or the corporate system.

The company was not able to get a complete view of their customer across multiple channels and therefore, customer information remained siloed.

GSC continued to grow and the legacy system vendor eventually sunsetted their solution. This gave GSC an opportunity to take a look at other offerings in the marketplace and evaluate what they needed. “We looked at this as a 10- to 15-year decision,” said Poulin.
As GSC evaluated solutions, it became clear that they would need one with the flexibility to grow with the business, easily accommodate changes as the company grew, and provide them with greater visibility into their customer and operational information.

GSC also had to factor in ease of use and how quickly new employees could be trained on the solution. Twice a year—during the spring growing season and the holidays, GSC hires 150 seasonal employees, mostly in the call center and warehouse. This is a large group of new employees each busy season that must be trained on the system.

GSC selected Microsoft Dynamics® AX, because of the flexibility of the Dynamics AX platform as well as the functional enhancements provided by RSM US LLP. Together, this created a solution that truly addressed GSC’s business needs. “When we looked at RSM, we initially thought it was a standalone like some of the other vendors,” said Poulin. “Having this solution built on Dynamics AX was a positive to us because as a customer, we could leverage Microsoft and RSM’s extensive knowledge and support, as well as the investment Microsoft has made in thousands of implementations worldwide. You get a more robust system year after year.”

GSC expects that the solution will create process efficiencies that will boost productivity, enable the automation of numerous manual processes and provide management with real-time visibility into sales and customer information. One example of how this change will impact GSC can be found within the company’s product purchasing process.

In the old legacy system, the merchandising department had to fill out a purchase order and print it in one system. They then had to take it to the legacy system and retype it in. Since the legacy system didn’t integrate with email, a team member had to print out the purchase order, scan it and attach the scan to an email they sent to the vendor out of their own Outlook account.

The merchandising system will now be fully integrated into Dynamics AX. The team member can fill out a purchase order request, which will flow into Dynamics AX and become a purchase order. They can then push a button and have that purchase order emailed to a vendor contact stored in the system. “We believe this new process will save us about 600 hours of labor each year and we have a number of these kinds of examples,” said Poulin. “We are just beginning to scratch the surface of what this system can do.”

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