Technology Integrator Eliminates Consulting Costs and Enhances Business Acumen

Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: High-tech and software development

Customer Profile

Logical Choice Technologies develops integration software and provides technology integration services for educational and government entities exclusively.

Business Situation

Logical Choice used SAP business management software, but when SAP consulting costs became prohibitively expensive, the company looked for an alternative.

Solution

Working with Microsoft® partner I.B.I.S., Logical Choice deployed Microsoft Business Solutions—Great Plains®, now part of Microsoft Dynamics™.

Benefits

- Reduces consulting costs by $100,000 annually
- Improves service levels
- Improves business processes

"It's all in one place. Any employee who touches Microsoft Great Plains can access the information they need to do their job."

Dinah McQueen, Controller, Logical Choice Technologies

Microsoft® Certified Partner Logical Choice Technologies installs electronic interactive whiteboards for classrooms and provides technology integration services to governmental and educational institutions. Business management software from SAP, QuickBooks Enterprise, and Fishbowl did not meet the company's financial reporting requirements. In fact, producing reports and making other changes to the software required expensive consulting services. Logical Choice looked for an alternative and chose Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains®, now part of Microsoft Dynamics™. Microsoft Gold Certified Partner I.B.I.S. helped Logical Choice make the switch to Microsoft Great Plains. With this complete, integrated business management solution in place, financial and operational information flows seamlessly and paperlessly across the organization.

Situation

Founded in 1994 and based in Duluth, Georgia, Logical Choice Technologies employs approximately 100 people who intimately understand the procurement processes and technology needs of educational and governmental organizations. The company implements technology to enhance the education and public sectors. Logical Choice provides IT products and services to the public sector and supplies the Promethean ACTIV classroom to the education market. The Promethean interactive whiteboard is bringing the classroom into the 21st century (Figure 1).

Logical Choice used SAP software to manage its business before switching to QuickBooks to manage its finances. The company began carrying inventory in early 2005 and implemented Fishbowl software to import inventory information into QuickBooks. QuickBooks and Fishbowl were not well integrated, so it was difficult to gain an accurate picture of the company's financial and operational information. "None of the software systems supported reporting at the department level," says Dinah McQueen, Controller at Logical Choice. "Lacking a single, integrated system, we found it difficult to create reliable reports." Logical Choice decided to look for a replacement business management solution.

Solution

Logical Choice selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains®, now part of Microsoft Dynamics™. McQueen saw that Microsoft Great Plains offered all the functionality and features Logical Choice needed: a fully integrated and easy to customize business management solution that met the company's reporting requirements. The company engaged Microsoft Gold Certified Partner I.B.I.S. to deploy Microsoft Great Plains version 8.0 in December 2005. Microsoft Great Plains runs

on servers running Microsoft Windows® 2000 Server operating system. By May 2006, Logical Choice will upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics GP 9.0, also with the assistance of I.B.I.S.

Logical Choice uses these Microsoft Great Plains modules:

- Financials
- Distribution
- Field Service, with Returns
- Sales Order Processing
- Purchase Order Processing
- Report Writing, with Crystal Reports
- eConnect

Logical Choice uses Microsoft Great Plains to manage and report finances and to improve management of products and services. In the past, the company's field service group tracked requests for professional engineering, training, and installation services on spreadsheets, which were typically printed out. "You can see how something might have fallen through the cracks or be overlooked among all the spreadsheets," says McQueen. Now, inside sales personnel enter the service or installation request as an order in Microsoft Great Plains, and it flows through to a SmartList used by warehouse staff or the field service group.

To schedule installations and services, Logical Choice plans to rely on a product from I.B.I.S. called I.B.I.S. Scheduler, which integrates with Microsoft Great Plains. I.B.I.S. Scheduler looks and feels like a calendar in Microsoft Office Outlook® messaging and collaboration client. Dispatchers schedule work and assign resources, and I.B.I.S. Scheduler updates Microsoft Great Plains.

The company uses the Microsoft Great Plains eConnect module to provide the interface between the company's quote system and

Figure 1. Logical Choice Technologies outfits classrooms with state-of-the-art visual learning technologies.

Microsoft Great Plains. "Our vision is to eventually use eConnect to connect to our drop ship vendor's Web site or database, so their system can seamlessly post to our receipts and sales orders in Microsoft Great Plains," says McQueen.

Logical Choice appreciated working with I.B.I.S. for a number of reasons. "I knew from experience that I.B.I.S. is responsive," states McQueen. "The deployment was on time and on budget. Also, because I.B.I.S. originally created the software that eventually became the Microsoft Great Plains Field Service module, I knew we'd be working with a knowledgeable team."

Benefits

Microsoft Great Plains does much more for Logical Choice than meet its financial reporting needs. The company enjoys a complete, customizable, integrated business management solution that helps Logical Choice reduce costs, solidify customer and partner relationships, and sharpen its competitive edge.

Reduces Consulting Costs by $100,000 Annually

"It seemed like everything that needed to be changed in SAP required consulting time, and costs added up quickly," says McQueen. "The system actually became cost-prohibitive." With the switch to Microsoft Great Plains, Logical Choice gets the reports it needs for making informed business decisions without paying the high consulting cost associated with using SAP software. The company expects to avoid $100,000 in consulting fees that would have been required had they continued to use SAP.

McQueen and the IT team at Logical Choice—with support from a trusted Microsoft partner—can integrate and customize Microsoft Great Plains and create custom

reports at a fraction of the effort and cost required by other software products.

At one time, McQueen was a Microsoft Great Plains consultant, so her knowledge of the software has been highly valuable for Logical Choice. Still, for day-to-day issues and questions, McQueen relies on the support offered by Microsoft Dynamics.

"I use the knowledge base extensively, and every user can review the knowledge base online or submit a support request," remarks McQueen. "Pivotal in our decision to go with Microsoft Great Plains was the fact that Microsoft has been building this product over a number of years, and it has probably the best support of any system I know of."

McQueen sees the benefit in the fact that Microsoft Great Plains completely interfaces with other Microsoft products, "IT staff who are Microsoft certified can easily adapt to supporting Microsoft Great Plains. Because it's a Microsoft product, they don't have to learn a new code base or methodology."

Improves Service Levels

Microsoft Great Plains, together with I.B.I.S. Scheduler, will help Logical Choice schedule installations easily and accurately. "Microsoft Great Plains boosts the level of professionalism and, therefore, credibility," says McQueen.

Because orders flow seamlessly through a single, integrated system, orders and service requests no longer get forgotten, lost, or delayed.

"The interface between sales order processing and purchase order processing is a huge time saver because we do a lot of drop ships," remarks McQueen. "Our implementation is new enough that we don't have numbers to share related to how much more quickly invoiced receipts are coming in

For More Information

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

For more information about Logical Choice Technologies products and services, call (770) 564-1044 or visit the Web site at:
www.logicalchoicetech.com

For more information about I.B.I.S. products and services, call (770) 368-4000 or visit the Web site at:
www.ibisinc.com

or how much order accuracy has improved. But it's so easy with Microsoft Great Plains to do the sales order, create the purchase order, and then do a shipment or invoice receipt on it and it's done."

Improves Business Processes

Logical Choice has improved business processes and information access and has virtually eliminated spreadsheet print-outs and paper forms. "We use the attachments to Purchase Orders and Sales Orders," says McQueen. "The attachments keep information in the system. We're not running all over the place hoping to find a piece of paper. There is no paper. Plus, with the Microsoft Great Plains Field Service module, we have better control of orders."

Information is available to anyone who needs it, including financial managers, from anywhere. "It's all in one place. Any employee who touches Microsoft Great Plains can access the information they need to do their job," concludes McQueen.

Microsoft Dynamics

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

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

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