

SYMBIANT TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

CUSTOM VERSUS PACKAGED

HOW MICROSOFT DYNAMICS NAV
INCORPORATES THE BEST OF BOTH
WORLDS

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document has been created to effectively communicate the differences between custom and packaged ERP products. After years of experience, Symbiant has been fortunate to have experienced all of the different facets of custom vs. pre-packaged systems, and has determined that there is no silver bullet to success if basing a purchase decision entirely on a system that is built from the ground up or a system that comes preconfigured for a business.

The answer that we have been able to deduce from our years of experience is that balance between both ideals is required in order to effectively implement a solution within any business environment. ERP packages are always targeted as pre-packaged solutions that do not deliver what a “best of breed” software application may, and do not allow for the application to be expanded upon based upon your businesses workflow and needs. We have found that there is some truth to this statement as previous generation ERP products, such as MAS, Great Plans, and Business One; all have limitations that do not allow a company to effectively expand the solution to meet the requirements of the business and their workflows.

On the other side of the coin is the custom development that has been with the industry since the inception of computing itself. By creating a custom solution, customers feel that their requirements can be directly mapped into the application, and fail to look over the technical along with integration issues that are encountered with the implementation of the solution. Businesses feel locked in to the solution and do not have any path to support if the custom application designer goes out of business, or worst yet, cannot successfully implement the proposed solution because of technical and political challenges.

As with everything in life, balance is the key that businesses should focus on when trying to make a decision in order to meet their ultimate goals, which at the end of the day with an ERP/custom solution should be to deliver value to the business by streamlining processes, reducing expenses, and allowing for the business to maintain data for future initiatives within their industry.

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is different than most ERP systems as it was created as first and foremost, a development environment that was then put to use as an ERP system. Because of this focus, Dynamics NAV has amazing capabilities that exceed that of custom solutions, along with the fact that it does not limit the user experience to a pre-defined workflow.

IMPLEMENTATION

55 to 75 percent of all ERP/CRM/SCM solutions fail to meet their objectives¹. Most people would consider this statement to be extremely overhyped, but the reality is quite different.

In 1995, The Chaos Report (the landmark study of IT project failure) determined that 31.1% of projects will be cancelled before they ever complete, and 52.7% of projects will cost over 189% of their original estimates.²

Sadly, the list of project failures outweighs the rate of project successes within the United States. What does this mean for businesses that are looking at purchasing any type of IT related system, whether it is ERP, CRM, or infrastructure upgrades to a new operating platform?

The answer is simple. Find someone that's done it before, find someone who lives/breathes/eats what they preach, and finally, find someone that will be strategic with your business so that they can react as you grow and require new capabilities.

Symbiant has been, and will continue to be, this type of partner within the industry. With a success rate of 100%, we have proven time and time again that political/technical/workflow issues do not keep our projects from succeeding. With over 150 successful implementations varying from Financial Services to Advanced Medical Device Manufacturers, we have the experience and know-how to implement any type of workflow and system within a business.

So the key question is, "what makes these IT projects fail"? From a custom solution perspective, here are some points that any business should be concerned about when choosing a vendor to implement a solution within their environment.

SINGLE PARTY VS. MULTI-PARTY

Building a house is an extremely important part of any individual's life.

How does this statement relate to ERP/IT? You'd be surprised!

When you start your project, you usually hire your general contractor that will overlook the creation of your dream. This individual schedules the necessary builders/vendors and streamlines the building process so that everything is on schedule and on budget.

Have you ever heard of builders/vendors not living up to their promised schedules? The reality is much different than what is painted by the contractor when you first move forward.

¹ Documented by InfoWorld based upon Meta Group Report data:
<http://www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/01/10/29/011029opsurvival.html>

² Based upon facts presented by the Standish Group
http://www3.uta.edu/faculty/reyes/teaching/general_presentations/chaos1994.pdf

After the scheduling has occurred and building begins, delays can cause huge problems within your budget, and sometimes can make people become desperate to finish something when they do not feel that they have received the expected value that was communicated by their contractor.

Within construction, you usually cannot take someone that lays marble tiles and then have them start pouring cement in your basement and have a satisfactory outlook within your house. Many times, to save costs, people decide to take the “do-it-yourself” attitude to new heights by trying to finish a basement when they do not have the time, budget, or experience to do so. In almost all cases, someone with an experienced eye can catch these nuances, which reduces the overall look/feel/quality of the house.

When building your house, you want the contractor to address these delays by having them react with a plan to these every day encounters. Usually, a contractor has many other builders that can assist them in times where someone does not show up, which means that your house gets delivered on-time and with the expectations that you set at the beginning of the project.

Now let’s take this example and use it in the IT industry. You have chosen to use Symbiant as your contractor. You have set a budget and expectation on what you feel the software will deliver.

Since Symbiant focuses on systems implementations, and has done so for 14 years, the processes that we have developed within our implementation methodology starts churning away. We examine your workflow, determine what needs to be changed to satisfy your requests, and change the software to meet these goals. The best part about all of this is the fact that we already have the materials required to create the system right in our back yard. We have the programmers, analysts, project managers, and industry specialists that smaller companies cannot tap into. We have the strategic relationships with our customers, vendors, and even ISV (Independent Software Vendors) that allow for us to quickly and effectively expand the solution when needed. On top of that, we have all of it in house. There is no waste trying to communicate with a different software system as we all speak the same language. It is the ultimate in efficiency, which is a key factor to why our projects always succeed.

If a business looks at having multiple general contractors, they are looking at a recipe for disaster. Not only do they need to communicate their goals to another group of people, but they have to effectively maintain the relationship and integrate the solutions so that they all talk the same language. This is where costs will increase and cause many businesses to jump into the magical 189% over budget statistic that we have seen time and time again.

From what we have heard, the vendor that we are competing with would like to do a MAS 90 accounting software implementation along with a Sugar implementation along with a custom SCM solution that will handle the requirements of all systems. To us, this sounds like a smaller company that cannot handle all of the requirements that you have put forth and require other individuals to become involved in the game in order to effectively implement the solution. Why do we say this? Because at one point in our existence, Symbiant did the same thing. Only after time, going over budget, and learning that this was not the best way to address a systems implementation did we realize that the main reason for our problems was the lack of communication that was given between the customer and us. Since we have changed this almost 10 years ago, we have never run into the same problem

and have enjoyed watching our customers grow and prosper while utilizing the Microsoft Dynamics NAV product.

TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS

From the aforementioned statements, you can see that we do have experience within the integration of multiple systems. What type of technical limitations has Symbiant encountered in the past?

First and foremost, when integrating with any system, there will be technical challenges that will require businesses to make decisions they may regret in the future. One such example is the fact that custom development allows for a business to declare a field of any type and of any length. While this sounds great at first, many people do not follow-through with this process to one of its ultimate conclusions:

So what happens when a customer name in MAS 90 is 50 characters, and within Sugar it is limited to 30 characters?

This is what we would call a “buffer overrun” in the IT world. This type of error occurs when a larger string is forced to be copied to a string that does not support its length. In order to address this issue, custom integration software must be developed so that when the value is copied from one system to another, it either truncates the data, or the system with the lower value (Sugar in this example) needs to be extended (from 30 characters to 50 characters) which can be extremely costly if an ERP application does not support customization capabilities.

Not only does this raise concerns that will be discussed later in this document, but it also makes the solution extremely “hackable” by dissatisfied employees, or plain old internet hackers that want a challenge. If you do a search on Google for buffer overrun exploits, you will receive around 294,000 results that document these types of security issues³. With a custom integration, there is no way to guarantee that your data is safe...as advisories are generally not given by smaller software companies. This is usually not because they do not want to, it’s just that they do not have the resources to technically test every possible scenario that could occur within their environment. They also do not have a product that has gone through public scrutiny, which means that the solution is generally less secure than that of commercial applications.

With Microsoft Dynamics NAV, these issues do not exist as everything operates in what we call “managed code”. Managed code basically eliminates the possibility of buffer overrun/under runs by developers, and allows for a more secure environment to be created.

On top of that, Microsoft has one of the best Security Response teams⁴ within the industry. With their new focus towards security, the expectation for all businesses should be that the applications that are being developed will be more secure and usable for everyone. This should be crucial point to consider when purchasing any system for your business.

³ Buffer Overrun Exploits
<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=buffer+overrun+exploits>

⁴ Microsoft Security Response Team
<http://www.microsoft.com/security/msrc/default.aspx>

INTEGRATION AND MIDDLEWARE COSTS

With any multiple systems' integration, there is a potential beast lurking within the implementation that sometimes goes unnoticed until suddenly it's too late, or it continues to be a nuisance to businesses by providing poor performance and proprietary technologies that limit the integrated systems to a set of pre-defined rules.

What is this beast? It's called *Middleware*.

Middleware is classified as connectivity software that consists of a set of enabling services that allow multiple processes running on one or more machines to interact across a network⁵.

This technology concept is not new to our industry and was introduced in a 1968 NATO Software Engineering Conference⁶. In the 1980's, the concept started picking up steam and has once again resurfaced in today's business systems.

One of the core problems with middleware is the fact that it is usually custom developed by a vendor in order to satisfy specific needs within systems. This means that if you're middleware is not working correctly, none of your systems will communicate effectively. Imagine trying to do a CRM query on account sales data and not being able to complete it because your middleware did not support the function. We have seen this time and time again with the integration of these types of systems.

Because of this type of problem, business experience cost inflation within their projects. As users find new ways to break the middleware, the vendor needs to become re-engaged to fix these issues. These types of costs increase over time, and in the worst situation, are not supported by the vendor that created the custom interface.

With Dynamics NAV, you can skip the middleware. Everything is designed to work without issues, and can be extended by not only Symbiant, but around 2,700 other VAR's within the industry. If you want to expand Dynamics NAV to allow for interoperability between other applications, it comes with a framework already provided (Microsoft's .NET Web Services) that is supportable by all Microsoft developers as it is part of the operating system itself. This saves time, development costs, and user frustration once all said and done.

OPTIONS

What options do businesses really have when trying to select a system for the ERP/SCM/CRM? The common paths are:

1. Best of breed with middleware
2. Best of breed with custom workflow and more middleware
3. Prepackaged with no customization capability

⁵ Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute
http://www.sei.cmu.edu/str/descriptions/middleware_body.html

⁶ Middleware origin
http://ironick.typepad.com/ironick/2005/07/update_on_the_o.html

4. Prepackaged with customization capability

Of those choices, based upon our experiences, the fourth item on the list provides for the greatest flexibility, cost control, and success rate within any IT/ERP project. The reasons for this are:

1. No Middleware – You do not need to integrate middleware to get the systems talking to each other...it is supported out of the box and designed for extensibility.
2. Uniform Technological Limitations – By keeping development within a confined sandbox, a business increases their productivity, training, and creation of new features to an application then by using 10 other technologies to try to encompass the same need. Someone that uses Sugar will not know how to use MAS 90, but someone that knows how to enter a sales document in NAV will also know how to create a contact in the RM portion of the software as they are transparent in the same design. Hot keys are consistent, and learning 3 different systems to get your job done does not exist.
3. Vendor Support – Lets' face it, Microsoft is not going away any time soon. They are a market leader that will be focused on this business sector for years to come. If something goes wrong, who would you rather have at your side?
4. Strong Customization Capabilities – We have *never* encountered an issue that could not be addressed within Dynamics NAV. What any custom programmer can do within Java, we can do within C#.
5. Future Growth – As new technologies are added, you will have the capability to upgrade to these future versions and use the technologies within your business. In 5 years after going live with your custom solution, it will feel stale and out of date. Do you really want to spend all that money and then find that a new technology could increase you order throughput by 90% or more?

You can rest assured that you have more options by going with a packaged system than that of any custom development package, and that you will have the capability to make decisions on your own terms, instead of that of someone else's.

STANDARDS

Microsoft has always been known as setting the de facto technology factors within the IT industry and continues to do so with the advancement of new products and integration technologies such as SQL Server and the .NET Framework.

But did you also know that they are applying these same standards to the ERP/CRM/SCM markets?

The Windows Workflow Foundation⁷ engine is another technological standard that Microsoft is pushing within the ERP industry. Microsoft Dynamics NAV will be using this

⁷ Windows Workflow Foundation
<http://msdn2.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa480193.aspx>

technology in the future, as it allows businesses to incorporate custom workflow within an existing ERP application to allow for the utmost in flexibility. The Dynamics NAV 5.1 product will be the start of this technology, along with future versions supporting more capabilities as the technology matures within the market.

MICROSOFT STANDARDS

The future is bright for Microsoft for many reasons. Along with technologic advancements in XML and Web Services, Microsoft is leading the pack in terms of revenue and mind-share dominance. Because of this, they are able to focus enormous amounts of money towards their research and development branches to fine tune and encompass almost all requirements that a customer can conceivably come up with within a systems implementation.

Want custom workflow? It already exists in Dynamics NAV.

Want web services to integrate with your partners? It already exists in Dynamics NAV.

Want a resource pool of over 1.8 million individuals that know your products? It already exists with Microsoft⁸.

Want a customer base of over 1 million users of Dynamics NAV users to bounce some ideas off of⁹? It already exists with Microsoft Dynamics NAV (as of March 2006).

TECHNOLOGIES

What technologies has Microsoft recently pushed to the market? Some of the key ones that are helping businesses succeed every day are:

- 1.) Windows – The platform where anything is possible. Microsoft has built upon the Windows platform to allow for an unprecedented development environment in which businesses can quickly and effectively deploy solutions that address every day issues.
- 2.) SQL Server – One of the most power Relational Database Management Systems (RDBMS), SQL Server 2005 introduces advanced technologies that allow for development of .NET code within SQL Server itself. This type of technology increases performance and capabilities for all businesses that use it.
- 3.) Web Services – Microsoft has been the driving force of this new and exciting technology. Remember when .NET was entirely focused on Web Services? Since then, the technology has matured and is now being used in almost every application that Microsoft creates.
- 4.) .NET – One of Microsoft's biggest gambles has been the focus of the .NET platform in which they create a consistent environment for all developers to build

⁸ Microsoft Certified Professionals Worldwide
<http://www.microsoft.com/learning/mcp/certified.mspx>

⁹ NAV Millionth User
<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/press/2006/mar06/03-28Convergence2006NAVPR.mspx>

upon. That gamble is now paying off and businesses throughout the world are taking advantage of this new technology.

- 5.) C#.NET – Maybe you’ve heard of it, and then again, maybe not. C# (C Sharp) is Microsoft’s new universal programming language. Its sole purpose was to deliver a fully Object Oriented Programming language, pushing beyond the limitations of Java and C++. It allows developers to program in human readable syntaxes, which allows for better applications by reducing the complexity required to read code on a machine.
- 6.) C/AL – C/AL is a fourth generation language that Microsoft uses within the Dynamics NAV platform. It is fully translatable to C# and contains key actions that are specific towards business processes. With over 1 million people using this technology to run their businesses, it has proven to be a steadfast and reliable language. The C/AL language is even being considered as Microsoft’s C# “killer” in which the best parts of C/AL are incorporated in the future language that Microsoft will bring to the market.
- 7.) Office – The Office stack (Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint) are critical applications within today’s business environments. The look and feel of these products has been setting the direction for all future products and will continue to increase in capabilities with future versions of the product line.

These technologies, and many others, consistently make the Microsoft stack so strong and powerful within today’s business environments.

When looking at a custom solution, businesses are usually forced to focus on the following technologies:

- 1.) Java – The Java language was released by Sun Microsystems in 1995. It is now approaching the 12 year mark in terms of age, and is limited in many ways. As with any language, it has had a useful and productive life, but is now considered by many as a language that has been overshadowed by C#. It was released as open source software on November 13th of 2006. Rumors have spread that the reason for this was because of Sun’s lackluster performance in the past 5 years in which they continue to lose money.
- 2.) Business Basic – MAS 90 is based upon this language, which was commonly used in the 80’s. Symbiant used to implement solutions that were based upon this language (Open Systems Accounting Software) but discontinued selling the product back in 1994.
- 3.) PHP – The ASP.NET competitor, PHP (Personal Home Page Tools) was released in 1995 by a Danish programmer named Rasmus Lerdorf. This technology is considered the open source equivalent of ASP.NET. Some severe limitations of this language, including the inability to support Unicode¹⁰ or multibyte strings, make it almost impossible to incorporate the language in a worldwide design.

¹⁰ PHP – Wikipedia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PHP#Criticism>

BEST PRACTICES

Symbiant offers a unique advantage within a systems implementation that most vendors do not provide. With all of the experience across all of the industries that we have implemented, we keep a repository of best practices that we can tap into in order to provide the best possible workflow that our customers demand and need.

On top of that, the Microsoft Dynamics NAV application has been implemented with over a million users, and their feedback and experience is incorporated into the system with each release. When Sarbanes-Oxley requirements were pushed within the industry, Microsoft was able to incorporate specific procedures that helped get the Dynamics NAV application certified within a business environment. The same can be said for any regulatory requirement that is deployed worldwide.

The best thing about all of this is the fact that as a customer of Symbiant, you benefit from the experience, know-how, and existing procedures that we have created at over 150 installations. We have always been open with our customers and will continue to do so in order to provide the best experience that we can possibly give to our end users.

SUPPORT

After an ERP system has been implemented, businesses will need support in order to effectively manage their system as they transition to a role in which they maintain all facets of the database and the technologies that drive them. If a vendor does not provide adequate support, business will suffer. If a vendor provides too much support, costs will increase and user satisfaction will decrease.

At Symbiant, we have struck the perfect balance with this by providing our experience, and combining that with experience from different sources within our industry. This gives Symbiant well rounded capabilities in which we can answer any question with an answer that can be verified throughout the industry.

USER GROUP

Navision User Group – The Navision User Group is an active group of Dynamics NAV end-users wanting to:

- Share expectations and learn from others
- Gain an understanding of the future of Dynamics NAV
- Learn about add-ons that are available
- Learn about upgrading to new releases (good and bad)
- Provide input to Dynamics NAV product management
- Develop peer relationships benefiting both parties

David Hutchinson is a founding member of the Dynamics NAV user group and remains on the board of directors.

PROGRAMMER / COMPANY DISPUTE

Developers are, as any IT manager will tell you, unique individuals that are extremely intelligent, but sometimes lose scope of what the true “end-game” will be when a system is implemented. We have seen this within many business environments, and while it is a stereotype within the industry, some of the truths behind the stereotype exist in most developers in the industry.

What happens when a business is working with a smaller company and finds out that the developer is not doing what is required of him/her? The simplest answer would be to get a different developer, but from the software vendors’ position, this is a timely and expensive transition.

Each developer in a custom language usually has their own “style” in which they create code. Some of them comment what they’ve done, some of them don’t. Some of the take methods and classes and re-write them, while others find the specific function and modify it so that there is no code waste. Because of this, it’s extremely hard to take someone and plop them into the driver’s seat and expect them to start being productive immediately. With a smaller company, they may not have an additional programmer that can take on the complexities of your business, which would lead to a failed project in the worst of all scenarios.

Even beyond the programmer...what happens when you have a company dispute with your vendor? Can you go to someone else when developing a custom application? The answer is generally NO. If you do transition, you will need to pay the ramp-up time for the developer to reassess the code that was created, try to understand the design, hope that there is some type of documentation that was left on-site, and then try to salvage what they can to create a system that will operate within your environment.

To Symbiant, this sounds like a lot of risk that can be mitigated.

When Navision was released into the market in the late 90’s, the founders of the application created a standardized development methodology for documenting code and processes within a Dynamics NAV application. Because of this, we have the capability of taking a developer off of a project and re-engaging another developer with minimal downtime. Our developers are not only trained in development, but in business process knowledge and workflow in order to provide the best value to our customers.

Symbiant is also not the only VAR doing this within the United States. There are over 2,700 VARs worldwide that can take our place in case of financial troubles, or the possibility that a customer is not satisfied with our services. The later has never occurred within our customer base, but it’s nice to know that you’re not locked into one vendor, as it keeps both companies honest in how they do business.

Symbiant is in business to ensure quality and speed within your environment. If not, we know that we could be shown the door and another VAR could pick-up where we left off. This has never happened, and we will continue to form strategic relationships with our customers to deliver the utmost in quality and satisfaction with our products and services.

MERGER / ACQUISITION / DISSOLUTION / CHANGE OF DIRECTION

In many ways the software industry is similar to the automobile industry. Both industries began with many hundreds of small players, and as time progressed the smaller players went out of business, were absorbed, or merged with other smaller firms to try to remain competitive. The software industry is going through this process right now. The remaining dominant players will be Microsoft, SAP and Oracle with a few other niche players around the fringe. Google has a lot of cash and has received a lot of press coverage lately, but so far, the only significant impact Google has had on most businesses is with regard to web searching and indexing.

The effect of mergers, acquisitions, and dissolutions on existing customers can be extremely painful. Only a few years ago, products like Red Wing Software, Open Systems, Real World, and Maconomy topped the feature charts and looked like great choices to bet a business on. All of these companies have either failed, are currently failing, changed market direction, or otherwise ceased to continue actively supporting their products and customers.

Microsoft has selected Dynamics NAV (as well as Dynamics AX) to be their go-forward products with firm road maps for each product extending past 2019. Microsoft is too large to be considered a merger or acquisition target, and is too big a legal target to significantly change direction with regard to its published and stated direction with the Dynamics NAV (and AX) products. A decision to use Dynamics NAV as both the core ERP system and a platform for development is a much safer decision than use of almost any other platform.

FUTURE VISION

If you did decide to go with Dynamics NAV, what should you expect for future direction and vision from Microsoft?

- 1.) Technology – Web Services, XML, Workflow, and Office Integration are key technological points that Microsoft feels will help businesses make better decisions through better collaboration technologies, more openness of data within the infrastructure environment, and the capability to customize a solution to meet the businesses needs instead of conforming to a predefined rule set that was meant to be broke since its inception.
- 2.) Research – Microsoft is firmly entrenched and will continue to maintain and innovate¹¹ with the product sets that it has currently acquired.
- 3.) Features – New features will continually be added and maintained within the product. This, of course, means that some features will be implemented that you will not use, but there will be features that you will want that will be incorporated within the product lines. Features such as online Sales Tax integration are technologies that all customers can use, and with a custom application, would require re-writing the tax logic to work with the application.

¹¹ Steve Balmer's Letter to NAV Customers
<http://www.partnerpower.biz/documents/MicrosoftDynamicsRoadmapLetterfromSteveBallmer.pdf>

These basic pillars of focus, along with the support by Symbiant, should make any organization feel comfortable with their decision to use the Microsoft Dynamics NAV product.

VAR/ISV COMMUNITY

Dynamics NAV (formerly Navision) was originally developed by a Danish company, Navision a/s. When Navision a/s decided to go to market with Navision, Navision a/s saw that the market would be comprised of itself (as the publisher of the product) and a distribution channel including both Value-Added Resellers (VARs) and Independent Software Vendors (ISVs)

The VAR's would each be required to have at least the following on-staff:

- One salesperson
- Two developers
- Two project managers (of which one is trained in implementation strategy)

The concept was (and is) that if a VAR is truly to provide value and be helpful to a customer, the VAR has to be engaged at both a technical and a project / implementation level. Today, there are over 2,700 Dynamics NAV certified VARs worldwide servicing over 57,000 sites with over 1,000,000 end-users. This rich VAR channel is one of the keys to Dynamics NAV success – while many VARs specialize in certain types of implementations, all VARs have the same passionate love of Dynamics NAV and work hard to maintain industry leading levels of customer satisfaction and software retention.

The ISV community is equally rich – ISVs do not directly sell Dynamics NAV to end-users, but instead offer products that work in conjunction with Dynamics NAV providing highly vertical solutions for specific industries. This often means that options other than custom development are available to meet specific end-user needs. A copy of a recent ISV catalog is included for review.

CUSTOMER COMMUNITY

One of the many wonderful advantages of purchasing an ERP system is having online and conference events in which customers from different industries gather to share ideas, workflows, and technologies with each other. Want to see how Theory of Constraints can be applied towards the Dynamics NAV MRP engine? Just go ahead and check out some of the many resources that are available to the Microsoft Dynamics NAV customers:

- 1.) Mibuso – A forum that is dedicated entirely to the Dynamics NAV product lines. These forums allow for customers to ask questions, get answers, and even participate in technologies that enable the NAV platform for future growth and potential (<http://www.mibuso.com/>).
- 2.) Dynamics User Group – Another forum that provides a wealth of information to users of the Dynamics produce lines (<http://dynamicsuser.net>).
- 3.) Microsoft Convergence – The Microsoft Convergence event is where users from all across the world come together to see the new technologies, add-ons, and

enhancements to the Dynamics product lines. This is where you “hear it first” from Microsoft on their direction and commitment to the community (<http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics/convergence/default.aspx/>).

As these are just a critical subset of sites that customers should pay attention to, other sites that are specific to development within C# or .NET programming languages, can be directly applied to the Dynamics NAV environment.

One user interface, one click, infinite capabilities. The Dynamics way...

STABILITY OF SUN MICROSYSTEMS

While a fairly minor point, but a point none-the-less, Sun Microsystems has not been profitable for the past 5 years. Sun is the creator of Java, and while Java has been released under the GPL, it will not have a major corporate backing if Sun does declare bankruptcy.

Microsoft, on the other hand, has had steady profitability (13 billion dollars last year) and has been able to do this by utilizing the new .NET languages to make the Microsoft brand a software powerhouse within the market.

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
	6/30/2006	6/30/2005	6/30/2004	6/30/2003	6/30/2002
Total Revenue	13,068.00	11,070.00	11,185.00	11,434.00	12,496.00
Net Income (Loss)	-864	-107	-388	-3,429.00	-587

Figure 1: Sun Microsystems Performance

Who would you rather choose to buy into...a company that continues to see its profits slide, or a company that is profitable and is re-investing its profits into new technologies for future growth?

FUTURE

MICROSOFT VISION AND STACK

Microsoft is a large company with many strategies, and at times, it can be difficult to understand exactly what Microsoft is aiming for. In short, Microsoft wants to be the dominant player in each of the key market areas it chooses to enter. These market areas include desktop operating systems, server operating systems, information worker technologies (i.e., Microsoft Office), business systems (ERP, CRM, Retail Management Systems), and entertainment systems (Xbox). Microsoft tends to make exceptionally long term investments as measured against other American firms. For example, it took Internet Explorer a full 12 years to become the king of all Internet browsers.

Microsoft has a great advantage in that it controls the experience most computer users have from the moment they turn on the system until the end of the work day. Over the next few years, Microsoft will leverage the many technologies it has in its portfolio to release the most highly integrated work flow solutions in the history of computing. Specific examples of this integration include Office/Outlook integration with Dynamics NAV, tight linking with

SharePoint, integration of IIS and linking with MapPoint. When all of these technologies work together, the results can be amazing. Microsoft's term for all of these technologies working in harmony is "integrated innovation", and this term is a key factor within the Microsoft development labs. Recently, Steve Ballmer demonstrated the benefit of integrated innovation to a group attending Convergence, the annual Dynamics user and partner meeting. Looking at this demonstration, the benefit of the integrated innovation concept becomes immediately apparent.

MICROSOFT DYNAMICS NAV 5.1

Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.1 works smoothly with other leading Microsoft products and technologies to boost productivity, improve collaboration, and increase business insight.

Integration lowers the total cost of ownership of the Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution because it makes it easier for Microsoft partners to deploy, customize, and maintain your solution.

Once the solution has been deployed, the integration helps you do more, faster because:

- **People can work faster in familiar programs.** Integration takes the hassle out of administrative tasks because Microsoft Dynamics NAV works better than ever with the Microsoft Office system and other Microsoft software. The familiar user interface and well known Microsoft Office system look and feel help your people work more efficiently.
- **You can maximize your existing systems.** Microsoft Dynamics NAV doesn't disrupt business because it connects smoothly with existing systems and helps you get the most out of your existing technology investment.
- **You can more easily gather and collect data.** Microsoft Dynamics NAV makes it possible to bring together the right data from multiple systems and enables you to share the information cost efficiently.
- **You get the support you need for confident decision-making.** Integration gives you access to a wide range of business insight tools that help people make the right decisions at the right time.

8 ways integration with Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.1 helps you get more done—faster

1. Work fast in Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheets

Integration with Microsoft Office Excel makes everyday tasks much simpler and less time-consuming. There's no need to jump from one application to another. For example, let's say a sales manager needs to hand out a customer list to his team, but wants to modify it in Office Excel first. The sales manager can click the Export to Excel icon in Microsoft Dynamics NAV. Then the sales manager can use Office Excel as usual, adding columns and inserting comments with additional information, such as the responsible account manager, a priority number, and other information about each customer.

2. Use Microsoft Office Word formatting when you need it

It's just as easy to export data to Microsoft Office Word as it is to Microsoft Office Excel. If a salesperson wants to send a customer a letter, for example, the salesperson can export all the necessary information from the customer card in Microsoft Dynamics NAV directly into a sales letter style sheet in Office Word.

The salesperson might also want to export information that requires a calculation, such as a price list with availability of products. Once the data is exported, the salesperson can continue to use Office Word formatting as usual, including adding headings, making text bold, inserting images, and so on.

3. Save time and hassle by synchronizing with Microsoft Office Outlook

Any field from any table in Microsoft Dynamics NAV can be synchronized with Microsoft Office Outlook. The only limitations are the restrictions your administrators place on a given user. People can schedule meetings, manage contacts, and send e-mail messages in just one program, and the data will automatically be updated in both Microsoft Dynamics NAV and Office Outlook.

4. Exchange data in a cost-efficient way with Microsoft BizTalk Server

Tight integration with Microsoft BizTalk Server helps you reach out to new trading partners. You can exchange data cost-efficiently, regardless of the system a trading partner uses or the standards they require. Information sent or received is automatically updated in Microsoft Dynamics NAV. This eliminates the need for manual data entry and significantly increases data accuracy.

5. Create links to control and share unstructured data

Companies often have a lot of relevant information they need to refer to in unstructured formats and sources such as e-mails and Web sites. In Microsoft Dynamics NAV, you can add links to any Web site or file stored on a document management system, such as Microsoft Office SharePoint Server. For example, you could create links from an item in Microsoft Dynamics NAV to a product Web site, a video demo of the product, images of the product, or to other documents created in the Microsoft Office system. Links can be created from any form in Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

6. Find maps and directions directly from the program

Integration to Microsoft Windows Live Local Search gives you access to a valuable, time-saving function. You just click a button next to the relevant address in Microsoft Dynamics NAV on the customer card, for example, and then follow the simple driving directions on the screen. You can also print out a map and step-by-step directions. You can view, print, and get driving directions between any two addresses stored in the system.

7. Make decisions confidently with built-in business analytics

With tools such as online analytical processing (OLAP) enabled by Microsoft SQL Server, you can draw upon table relations within Microsoft Dynamics NAV for a multi-dimensional view of data (for example, how a particular product is performing in a certain region in a given time period). You can access the cubes in a reporting application tool, such as Microsoft Office Excel or the Business Analytics Advanced Viewer.

8. Get the right information to the right people

You can easily store and share information from Microsoft Dynamics NAV with your people. For example, if a manager wants to make weekly sales reports available to salespeople in the field, the manager can maintain the list in just one place. The relevant salespeople (who have been given access rights) can then view the sales report using Microsoft Dynamics NAV Employee Portal. Employee Portal connects Microsoft Dynamics NAV to Microsoft Office SharePoint Server to give people a simplified view of important business data on their own personalized intranet home pages without having to be trained on Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

ENDORSEMENT OF OPEN SOURCE

In the past, it was known that there were two major separate camps within the IT industry. The Windows camp and the Open Source camp which included Linux, BSD's, and other Unix variants.

When Microsoft first learned of the Open Source market, and what it could potentially do to their revenue and profits, they decided to take an aggressive stance against the fledgling operating systems and environments to try to instill doubt within the minds of customers. This strategy had significant blowback, and caused the two camps to solidify even more. Not only was Microsoft getting a bad reputation for using such strong handed tactics, it also started alienating itself within the industry.

Since then, luckily, times have changed for Microsoft. The culture within the organization is maturing to the point where they do see the advantages to the competitive landscapes that are being created by customers, and have decided to do the opposite of what they had done in the past.

Microsoft is now licensing technology to increase the interoperability of Linux platforms with the Windows environments¹².

With this announcement will come increased support of open source platforms to increase the interoperability between platforms and business solutions in the future.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

Microsoft maintains one of the largest R & D budgets of any software company. For fiscal 2006, this budget was \$6.58 billion. A significant amount of this development budget is

¹² Microsoft and Linspire
<http://seattle.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/2007/06/11/daily23.html>

spent on the Dynamics NAV product, while other amounts are spent on products that either directly or indirectly enhance the Dynamics NAV end-user experience (SQL Server, Windows Vista, IIS, etc.)

What makes Microsoft a great software company is the ability of the company to fund consistent and continuous development of its products. Microsoft does not always get every product right the first time around. It does, however, tend to correct problems over time in a well-thought out and organized fashion, resulting in “version 2” and “version 3” products that are of extremely high quality. Once products get to a “version 4 or version 5” level, they tend to be market dominant. This is a pattern repeated over and over within Microsoft and can be seen almost all of its product lines.

Dynamics NAV just released at the “version 5” level. The sales and growth numbers have never been higher. With the continued development budget being poured in to version 5.1 and 6.0 Dynamics NAV is rapidly becoming the de-facto standard for small and medium business accounting and ERP.

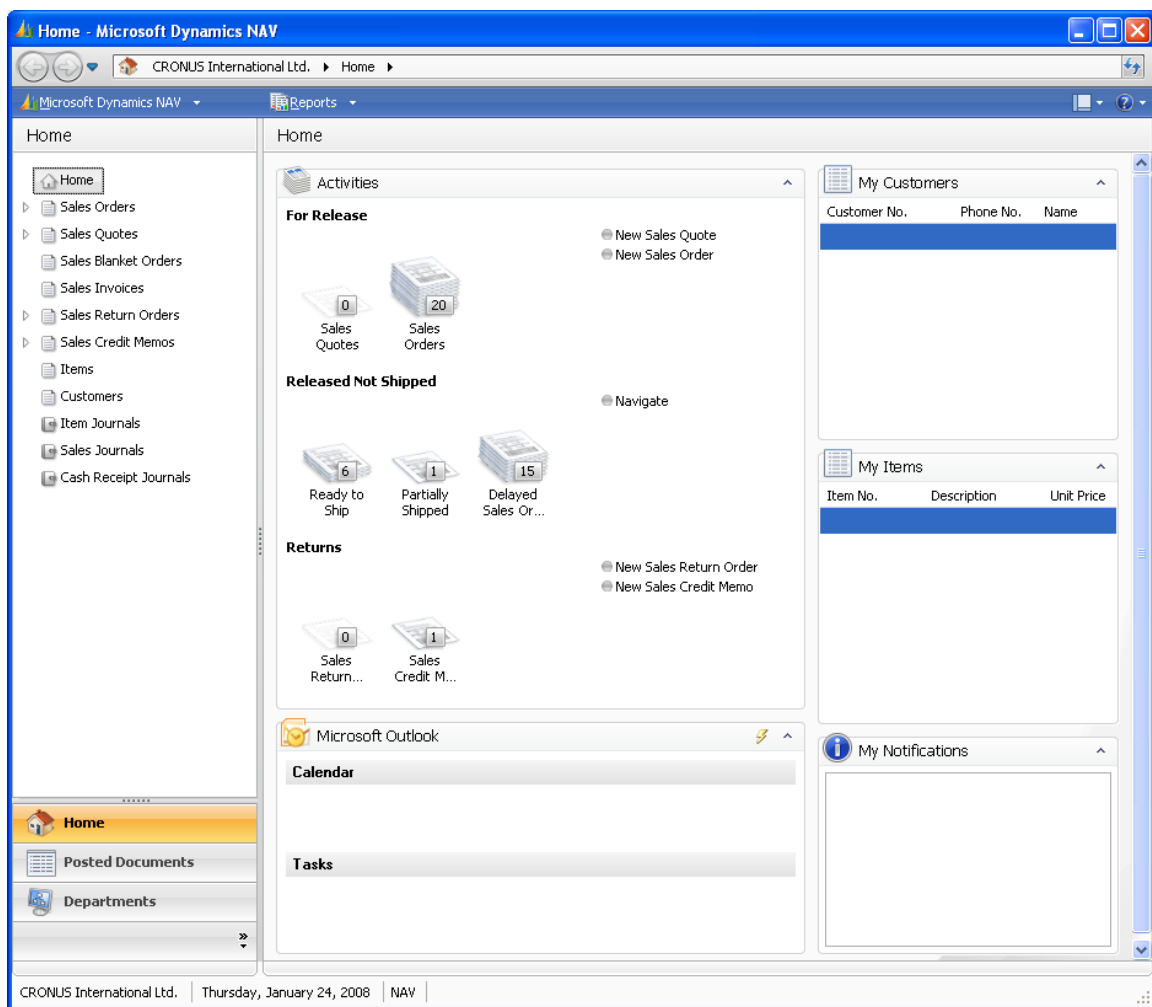


Figure 2: Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.1 Home Screen

Edit Sales Order - 1001 · Spotsmeyer's Furnishings

Actions ▾ Related Information ▾

1001 · Spotsmeyer's Furnishings

General

No.: 1001 Order Date: 1/24/2008
 Sell-to Customer No.: 01121212 Document Date: 1/24/2008
 Sell-to Contact No.: CT000006 Requested Delivery Date:
 Sell-to Customer Name: Spotsmeyer's Furnishings Promised Delivery Date:
 Sell-to Address: 612 South Sunset Drive External Document No.:
 Sell-to Address 2:
 Sell-to Post Code: US-FL 37125 Salesperson Code: JR
 Sell-to City: Miami Campaign No.:
 Sell-to Contact: Mr. Mike Nash Responsibility Center:
 No. of Archived Versions: 0 Assigned User ID:
 Posting Date: 1/24/2008 Status: Released


Customer Sales History

Customer ... 01121212
 Quotes: 1
 Blanket Or... 0
 Orders: 1
 Invoices: 0
 Return Ord... 0
 Credit Mem... 0
 Pstd. Ship... 0
 Pstd. Invol... 0
 Pstd. Retu... 0
 Pstd. Credi... 0

Customer Statistics - ...

Customer ... 01454545
 Balance (L... 222,241.32
 Outstandin... 34,702.82
 Shipped No... 0.00
 Outstandin... 0.00
 Shipped No... 0.00
 Outstandin... 0.00
 Total (LCY): 256,944.14
 Credit Limit... 0.00
 Overdue Amounts (LCY...
 Balance Du... 0.00
 Sales YTD (... 0.00

Customer Details

Customer ... 01121212
 Phone No: 

Lines

Type	No.	Description	Location Code	Quantity	Reserved Quantity	Un
Item	1000	Bicycle	YELLOW	10	0	PC

Invoicing
Shipping
 Foreign Trade USD
 E - Commerce
 Prepayment 0

OK Test Report Post Post and Print Post Batch Order Confirmation Work Order

Figure 3: Microsoft Dynamics NAV 5.1 Sales Order

CONCLUSION

Much has changed since the first ERP systems started cropping up in the 1960's. No longer do ERP systems focus on just local inventory and business management, but they also integrate collaborative commerce which allows for the sharing of data with suppliers and customers.

This new technology, as dubbed by Gartner, is classified as ERP II, and is a status that the Microsoft Dynamics NAV application can definitely live up to. EDI, Web Services, and E-Commerce integration are just a few of the inherent technologies that exist within the product. These technologies give businesses the capability to expand the solution to fit their needs, instead of focusing on rebuilding the application from the ground up.

So why choose Dynamics NAV over a best of breed/custom solution?

The answer is simple. Instead of redesigning everything from the ground up, you get a package that fits 75-80% of what your business does without having to write it from scratch. You eliminate costly middleware, and ensure consistency across all facets of the business. You give your employee's greater control of the data, and more capabilities to create OLAP cubes to report off of what you have gathered within the transactional system. You also receive the power to create your own workflow for specific processes, while still utilizing the technological backend that provides data constancy, performance, and scalability within your environment. These along with the many other aforementioned points within this document strongly suggest that you would be getting a better deal by following this path, instead of risking custom development of any type with any existing systems combinations.

So why pick Symbiant?

We'd like to think because we care and feel that we provide the best value proposition of anyone within our market. Our experience, diligence, and participation within the industry has taught us a lot about the industry and the individuals that are in it. We see customers burned every day by making bad choices, and then hearing about them and somehow becoming involved to help fix the issues that they created. Instead of coming in at the end to fix a costly mistake, we want to educate our prospects and customers on what we feel provides the best value. The reasons for this are both financial and personal, as our customers success is also our success.

With the Trade Group and Symbiant, we feel that the implementation will be on-time, on budget, and will not fall into the 70% category of project failures within our industry. We also strongly believe that our solution will meet the expectations set forth by the company's management, and will be a viable asset for the Trade Group in future years as the technological boundaries are pushed, and collaborative forces behind them bring the supply chain even closer than what it has been in the past.

Symbiant and Microsoft are your guaranteed picks for a successful implementation and strong future.