



Technology Vendor Provides Complex, Dependable Integration with Enhanced Efficiency

Microsoft Corporation



Microsoft Dynamics Partner Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United States
Industry: Professional services—IT services

Partner Profile

A Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and 2008 Worldwide Microsoft Dynamics® Partner of the Year, Tribridge provides critical business applications and infrastructure for organizations across the United States.

Business Situation

Tribridge needed to provide a strategically critical, complex implementation and integration of Microsoft Dynamics GP with other solutions.

Solution

Tribridge engaged Advanced Product Support Services for the Design and Development Strategies for Microsoft Dynamics to deliver a reliable, repeatable project.

Benefits

- Reduce costs, increase profitability
- Address issues rapidly, with minimal risk
- Boost competitive standing and credibility with customers
- Deliver strategic value at optimal economy

Technology Vendor Provides Complex, Dependable Integration with Enhanced Efficiency

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Cesar Cordero, Senior Technical Manager, Tribridge

Tribridge, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and 2008 Worldwide Microsoft Dynamics® Partner of the Year, needed to implement Microsoft Dynamics GP in integration with a customer solution and third-party procurement software tools for a public-sector customer. Looking to use its developer resources as efficiently as possible, Tribridge accessed guidance and insight from Microsoft within the service Design and Development Strategies for Microsoft Dynamics. A dedicated advisor from Microsoft worked closely with Tribridge to provide guidance, validate architectural approaches, resolve technical issues, ensure long-term viability of the solution, and help deliver best value to the customer. Tribridge completed the complex project successfully, and is already taking this proven integration solution to other customers to help them address critical challenges.



Situation

Tribridge is a Gold Certified Microsoft® consulting firm, recently named the 2008 WORLDWIDE Microsoft Dynamics® Partner of the Year. Tribridge implements, secures, and supports critical business applications and core infrastructure for organizations across the U.S. Tribridge experts combine an average of 15 years experience with established methodologies to generate practical results, including a hundred percent "go live" rate since the start of the company more than a decade ago. Tribridge focuses on technology solutions in five closely integrated areas that include the Microsoft Dynamics enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Microsoft SharePoint® technology and custom software applications, as well as Microsoft core infrastructure, security, and managed services. Tribridge headquarters are in Tampa, Florida, with offices in ten other locations.

Highly Complex Project on a Strict Deadline

ERP implementations in the public sector and not-for-profit organization present unique complexities and challenges. Public-sector entities and not-for-profit organizations need to demonstrate accountability and transparency in managing the sources of funds needed for operations. For many such customers, Tribridge implemented Microsoft Dynamics GP as the comprehensive business management software together with a custom Tribridge solution to manage grants and a software tool from another vendor to manage procurement.

A Tribridge customer in the public sector needed an integrated solution of Microsoft Dynamics GP with both the custom grant management solution and functionality to manage encumbrance transactions through a requisition system. As Cesar Cordero, Senior Technical Manager at Tribridge, recounts,

"We needed to deliver a successful integration and provide functionality that did not exist at the time—and we only had six months for the entire implementation, integration, and testing of the solution." This integration was the most complex and demanding project that Cordero faced in his career of more than 15 years managing similarly challenging software integrations and implementations.

Opportunity in Responding Effectively to Urgent Customer Needs

In addition, shortly after taking on this first customer need for integrating Microsoft Dynamics GP and the financial software tool, Tribridge consultants became involved with two other customers who needed the same kind of integration. That meant significant business was at stake for delivering a successful, reliable integration of the software solutions involved.

Cordero, who leads the Microsoft Dynamics GP integration team at Tribridge, had no doubt that his technologists and developers could accomplish the results the customer sought. However, the shortened schedule with a firm deadline posed a challenge. The Tribridge experts had no time to spare for architectural misjudgments, reverse engineering, or trial-and-error experimentation. They had to deliver the needed functionality, with the proper architecture, as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

Some of the capabilities the customer asked for in managing encumbrances were without precedent. Although Tribridge used current software development kits (SDKs) from Microsoft, these did not offer all the tools and guidance Tribridge developers needed in such a complex integration. And, Tribridge wanted to ensure that its custom technology would remain viable through the next few

iterations of Microsoft Dynamics GP and the SDKs associated with the solution.

Given these complex challenges, Tribridge decided to investigate what assistance might be available from Microsoft.

Solution

Since Tribridge already engaged Microsoft Dynamics Advanced Product Support Services for other service needs, the company contacted a Service Sales Manager to learn what help was available. Within Advanced Product Support Services, an offering called Design and Development Strategies for Microsoft Dynamics gave ready access to the advanced insight and guidance Tribridge required.

Design and Development Strategies provides partners of all sizes and specializations with a dedicated advisor who can provide practical direction throughout the application development life cycle. The advisors contribute knowledge and ideas from years of intense experience with Microsoft Dynamics and can draw on extensive Microsoft resources, including members of the product development teams. Partners can purchase Design and Development Strategies hours or enlist more comprehensive, program-level support.

“We had immediate and absolute certainty that by using Design and Development Strategies, we could accomplish all of our goals for the customer, in time,” says Cordero. He soon built a close collaborative relationship with the Microsoft advisor for Tribridge. Says Cordero, “The Advisor assisted Tribridge in making the most of finite resources and budgets so that we could work as efficiently as possible and focus on our customer commitment.” From the advisors’ experience with many projects and partners, Microsoft also develops and documents best

practices that can benefit the entire Microsoft Dynamics Partner ecosystem.

Moving Rapidly from Discovery to Architecture and Development

Initially, Cordero asked for a high-level validation of the Tribridge approach. As he describes the discovery phase of the project, “Our Microsoft advisor wanted to completely understand the business problem and customer needs before discussing any design or development work. In the next step, Microsoft assessed the solution architecture, business logic, and solution components needed for our project.”

Early design feedback from Microsoft verified that the Tribridge approach was sensible in terms of three types of transactions that the solution had to process, but was not at all viable for a critical transaction that had to do with requisitions and encumbrances. The Tribridge developers would have implemented corrections, but would have spent too much precious time in doing so. At that point, Cordero decided it made best sense to involve Microsoft more closely in the development process to mitigate any needless risks and avoid preventable roadblocks.

Building Trusting, Collaborative Team Relationships

The collaboration between Microsoft and Tribridge began with a several one-hour to two-hour meetings. Once the team defined the project and began making progress, interactions changed to brief calls to help address issues as they occurred. During the course of the project, the relationship between the Tribridge team and Microsoft became more of a mentorship, with Tribridge developers and technicians following a well-established, proven path. All consultative meetings took place over the telephone, using Web-based and other standard tools to

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Cesar Cordero, Senior Technical Manager, Tribridge

share screen content between Microsoft and Tribridge.

The Microsoft advisor conducted thorough tools and needs analysis to help establish architecture and project flow for creating the integration of encumbrance transactions. Then, it was essential to determine what business logic was already available in Microsoft Dynamics GP and which Tribridge developers needed to create. “Microsoft presented practical, valuable guidance very quickly,” says Cordero. “That immediately created a strong trust relationship.” Soon, Tribridge was comfortable contacting Microsoft any time with project-related issues, with a response often only a few hours away.

Ensuring Long-Term Viability of The Solution

The Microsoft advisor helped ensure that Tribridge solution development would be viable through planned enhancements of Microsoft Dynamics GP, making it possible for the customer to enjoy long-term value from the technology, with smooth software upgrades. The advisor wanted to ensure that application programming interface calls, for example, could carry through to the next iterations of Microsoft Dynamics GP. “Our advisor always considered the Microsoft product road map and strategy when sharing guidance and making recommendations,” says Cordero. “Microsoft aimed to provide Tribridge with the most strategic and advanced insight because it helps us compete and serve clients with optimal results.”

In the case of certain encumbrance line creations and requisition line-processing tasks that involved eConnect for Microsoft Dynamics GP, Microsoft provided Tribridge with actual code samples to shorten the development cycle. These code samples made use of automated code-generation

tools in order to guarantee the sound architectural design of the objects. And, when Tribridge developers’ efforts repeatedly returned errors stemming from faulty business validation rules in accessing software tables, the Microsoft advisor provided a resolution promptly and saved many work hours.

Cordero received powerful assistance from Microsoft in making software testing more efficient and consistent. “Microsoft analyzed our software quality-assurance process and helped us use automation most effectively so that we didn’t have to manually test all changes,” says Cordero. Automation contributed to minimizing the amount of time that the Tribridge team spent performing regression testing.

With assistance from Microsoft, Tribridge succeeded in delivering the integrated solution to the first customer. By the time the project concluded, two additional, similar projects were well underway.

Benefits

For Tribridge, working with a Microsoft advisor and drawing on Design and Development Strategies has made all the difference. Tribridge found a cost-effective, low-risk way to manage and deliver extremely complex software integration and implementation projects, and is now well poised to pursue similar customers with a great competitive advantage. “Microsoft went above and beyond in supporting us,” says Cordero. “Microsoft is completely committed to our success and that of the other partner organizations. Partners should make use of the service to help them navigate complex challenges.”

Reduce Costs, Increase Profitability

In the case of certain important encumbrance and requisition management procedures, Cordero estimated that his developers and

technicians would require approximately 120 to 150 hours for programming and testing. Working with Design and Development Strategies resources, they used 20 hours or less of their Microsoft advisor's time and comfortably met their deadline. Says Cordero, "In a critical instance, we saved roughly 100 to 120 hours of development and testing time and expense. And, the development life cycle shrank by almost one month."

The ability to call on the Microsoft advisor also helped Cordero keep technologists involved with customer-focused, billable work instead of seeing them absorbed by repeated, complex cycles of development, testing, and modifications. By using Design and Development Strategies, Tribridge managed to operate more profitably and honor its customer commitments, exceeding expectations.

Address Issues Rapidly, with Minimal Risk

With guidance provided on an hourly basis, the risk and expense are minimal. Tribridge paid only for the support it actually required from Design and Development Strategies, and could access it whenever necessary. "For a small, controlled investment, we received outstanding responsiveness and prompt resolution of the issues we brought to Microsoft," says Cordero.

Microsoft sometimes took up to a day to provide reliable responses to complex queries from Tribridge, although most of the time, the advisor presented a resolution within two hours or less, even when he was traveling out of the country. "As our primary contact, our advisor learned all about our business and customer, and was fully available to us," states Cordero. "I was immensely impressed by the immediacy with which he provided efficient, solid approaches to our challenges."

Boost Competitive Standing and Credibility with Customers

Tribridge expects continued, positive customer impact of its use of Design and Development Strategies, especially when customers scrutinize their spending and want to gain certainty that technology vendors understand their complex financial and operational management needs. In addition, customers want software products that help them be effective during challenging economic times. Management of encumbrances and requisitions, and demonstrating a high level of accountability in using funds, can be challenging for many organizations. Tribridge now has a way to set them at ease with a solution that maintains long-term value and enjoys backing from a leading provider. "To our customers in the public sector and nonprofit organizations, it means a lot that we developed an effective software integration by incorporating strategic guidance and insight directly from Microsoft," says Cordero.

Deliver Strategic Value at Optimal Economy

Working with Microsoft resources within the Design and Development Strategies partner service has transformed the quality of the Microsoft relationship for Tribridge. Cordero and his team have come to know the Microsoft support group much better and will approach the support team in a more effective, targeted manner going forward. Tribridge also appreciates the increased visibility for its accomplishments with a larger Microsoft audience. Says Cordero, "The level of trust and openness between Tribridge and Microsoft is critical to our success and allows our development work to have strategic, lasting value for both Tribridge and our customers."

In addition, the Tribridge team has gained substantial expertise by relying on Design and Development Strategies resources and

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For more detailed descriptions on Design and Development Strategies for Microsoft Dynamics or other Advanced Product Support Services available, or to inquire about pricing, contact MBSPProfessionalServices@Microsoft.com or call 1-888-875-9071 to engage with one of our Services Sales Managers

For more information about Tribridge products and services, call (877) 744-1360, or visit the Web site at: www.tribridge.com

insights. Says Cordero, “Our new best practices for development, testing, integration, and implementation of complex software projects will enhance the company’s efficiency for years to come and result in higher value, at better economy, for Tribridge customers.”

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

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics GP

- Services
 - Microsoft Dynamics Advanced Product Support Services
 - Design and Development Strategies for Microsoft Dynamics



About Tribridge

Tribridge is an IT services firm that delivers and supports technology, business management and core infrastructure solutions for organizations spanning diverse industries. Tribridge helps customers strategically leverage IT investments to become more productive, profitable, competitive and secure through proven methodologies, process optimization and industry best practices. We are dedicated to building a community in which organizations derive long-term business value from practical solutions that guarantee customer success and maximum return on investment. Headquartered in Tampa, Tribridge has customers, offices and team members across the U.S. and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2008 Microsoft Dynamics Worldwide Partner of the Year.

Contact Tribridge

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