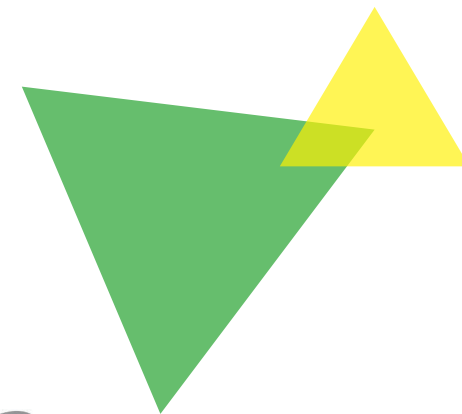




THRIVING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

10 Inspiring P2P Stories



**International Association of
Microsoft Channel Partners**



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Partnership as a Cornerstone of a Successful Business Strategy

In today's business environment – where customers' demands are increasing and time to respond is shrinking – organizations realize that, in order to develop unique offerings and provide new skill sets, they need to embrace the concept of partnership. From the largest multinational corporations, such as Microsoft, to the SMB segment, partnerships have become a critical element of business strategy.

At last year's Executive Partner Summit (EPS) in Cannes, Gavriella Schuster talked about the need to focus on points of alignment among companies, rather than areas where they compete.

“Every time we come together with our partners for a solution, we open a new socket that creates value for everyone... When you break it down, partnership is a combination of trust and empathy, mixed with an exchange of value.”

– Gavriella Schuster, Microsoft's Corporate Vice President,
Commercial Partner Channels & Programs

I couldn't agree more.

IAMCP has the concept of partnership firmly embedded in its core.

One of our ongoing efforts in encouraging partners to work together is our annual competition for best P2P customer cases, which honors MS partners that go above and beyond in providing innovative IT services and products to their customers by leveraging partnerships.

In 2017, we had 60 entries coming from five regions around the world.

This eBook collects ten winning stories that showcase the many benefits of alliances between Microsoft partners.

Through these case studies you will learn how coming together helped partners to obtain fresh ideas and opinions, grow knowledge and expertise, fill their skill gaps, break into untapped markets, discover new opportunities, and co-create new value for the customers.

I hope you'll enjoy the read and that in these stories you will find inspiration to forge new business friendships and grow together with your partners.

Gail Mercer-MacKay
Awards Chair, IAMCP International





QORUS WINS IAMCP GLOBAL PARTNER OF THE YEAR FOR A P2P SOLUTION WITH DOCUSIGN



Document Creation and Approval Processes are now 100 Percent Digital with Qorus, DocuSign and Microsoft Office 365

The Qorus solution, built on Microsoft Office 365, has been recognized by Microsoft for excellence on several occasions. The marketing and sales enablement app helps teams drive more sales by enabling them to discover, use and analyze the best content – all without leaving the familiar world of Microsoft Office and CRM.

Qorus is delighted with the success of the solution, and is now exploring new avenues for growth through strategic partnerships with organizations that offer complementary products.

The first of these strategic partnerships to take shape is with DocuSign, the global leader in eSignature documents.

Qorus and DocuSign: An Unparalleled Sales Effectiveness and Productivity Match

“When we met with DocuSign, it became clear that it was a perfect union,” Ray Meiring, CEO of Qorus Software.

“Together, we have created a bundled solution which streamlines an end-to-end document generation and execution process to deliver true enterprise value. The Qorus and DocuSign document creation solution gives sales, marketing and bid teams a secure and reliable way to create and manage high-value digital documents that require signatures – all within Office 365.”

The companies were able to integrate, test and pilot their bundled solution in record time.

Scott Owen, Senior Managing Director of Global Channels/Resellers at DocuSign explains: *“The Qorus application is well-designed and incredibly efficient. Time to market is extremely important and we were pleased to pilot the solution in record time – delivering incredible value to our customers.”*

Case in point: 150% Faster Document Creation, Agreement and Approval

SharePoint Revolution is an indirect CSP in the United States. The company’s CEO, Larry Nordlinger, wears many hats and spends a lot of time writing, managing and sharing business-critical documents like pitches, proposals, SoWs and contracts.

“We were delighted to be recognized by IAMCP as the best P2P solution in the Microsoft partner ecosystem this year. Our IAMCP membership, and the value that P2P brings our business by enabling us to extend our solutions, has helped us continue to grow.”

- Michelle Revsbech, Senior Vice President of Alliances, Qorus.

In 2017, Nordlinger decided to complete the transformation to a digital business by deploying the Qorus and DocuSign bundle for Office 365.

The company stores all its business development content centrally in SharePoint Online, and uses Office 365 to create and collaborate on documents.

By adopting Qorus and DocuSign for Office 365, SharePoint Revolution was able to create an end-to-end, cloud-based document creation and approval process.

The ability to do this without leaving Word, PowerPoint and Outlook has accelerated document creation, agreement and approval processes by 150%.

The Value of the IAMCP Ecosystem

This partnership is a great example of the power of networking.

“Partners like Qorus continue to drive innovation by taking advantage of our member eco-system,” said award committee chairperson and former IAMCP President, Gail Mercer-MacKay. “We are thrilled that Qorus has achieved this recognition. They are an ideal example of how, by working together, we can achieve more than any of us could achieve individually.”



“SharePoint Revolution uses Office 365 and Azure to efficiently create and manage all our content, including proposals, SoWs and contracts. Adding the Qorus and DocuSign bundle for Office 365 has made us even more productive and profitable.”

*Larry Nordlinger, CEO,
SharePoint Revolution*





ONE VDI SOLUTION THAT SAVED A LARGE BANK'S CRM INVESTMENT IN A LIMITED BANDWIDTH ENVIRONMENT



Extensive Plans Within Limited Capacities

South Indian Bank Ltd. (SIB) is a major private sector bank with headquarters at Thrissur in Kerala, India. SIB wanted to acquire leads from one department and provide more services to their growing customer base, across 27 states and three union territories in India, by implementing a modern CRM software solution. Its ultimate goal was more engagement and satisfied customers, leading to increased revenue.

Bank management chose the on-premises Microsoft Dynamics CRM, provided by Microsoft partner CCentric, and wanted to roll it out to 600 branches. But the new solution encountered severe issues in providing the desired outcome.

Namely, around 300 branches of SIB were located in rural areas where bandwidth is still limited to a range of 96 to 128 Kbps. SIB had already fully digitalized all its applications (core banking, email, and other business apps), which were carefully designed for such bandwidth, however, the addition of Microsoft Dynamics CRM put an extra load on their network.

With no additional bandwidth in rural areas, the CRM rollout was stalled in hundreds of bank branches. The issues included prolonged and delayed processes, where regular operations such as logging in, entering new data or filling forms took more than five minutes in each step.

Many times CRM would go through timeout errors due to lengthy delays and packet drops, which became a huge time drain to address and was leading to productivity losses.

It all resulted in frustrated users and produced the exact opposite effect of the bank's business goals, which was providing better customer service and ability to access data through any device.

Failed Attempts and Costly Upgrades

CCentric, Microsoft, and SIB tried to solve the problem with many different solutions, including WAN acceleration, but the attempt to deliver CRM to remote branches failed every time.

The only option left was to upgrade the network from 96/128 Kbps to 1 Mbps, which would increase their bandwidth costs by four times across 600 branches. Also, not all branches could get higher bandwidth due to the unavailability of telecom providers, and their users would be left out of CRM functions.

At that time, SIB's investment of time and money seemed lost, while Microsoft's reputation among all other banks and BFSI customers was at stake.

After two years of experiments, when the bank was about to give up on their entire investment in the new software,

"Having explored all the possible solutions in the market, Accops' solution fits right in with our goal to deliver Microsoft Dynamic CRM to 300 rural branches with a limited bandwidth of 96 to 128 Kbps. Also, Accops' Single sign-on solution reduced the login time from 5 minutes to just 10 seconds. Accops has uniquely addressed all the concerns from SIB & created a highly desirable win-win for both companies." - CCentric

CCentric introduced a new partner, Accops Systems. Hearing about Accops' success with their VDI solution, which delivers CRM as a hosted application by virtualizing the browser, SIB and CCentric decided to give them one last chance.

CRM Accessed Through a Virtual Browser

Accops' experts promptly visited rural branches and did an analysis, which confirmed the existing challenge, but also gave a ray of hope.

The demonstration and Proof of Concept of Accops' virtual browser solution showcased how CRM can be accessed even in a limited environment with only 64kbps of bandwidth. The test proved regular access to the CRM system and positive user experience in one of the rural branches.

However, soon after, users were complaining about the CRM system's slow animated menu bars and the two login procedures (to Accops VDI and Dynamics CRM).

Accops successfully solved those issues as well, by engineering a new module and a single sign-on solution.

From that point on, CRM was rolled out to all SIB branches and has been working smoothly for the last two years, even in areas with 64 Kbps or 96 Kbps of bandwidth.

Digitalization that Brought Time and Cost Savings

For SIB, CCentric, and Microsoft, Accops' VDi solution came as a knight in shining armor that saved the day:

- CRM is finally rolled out to all 600 SIB branches
- Time required for the login data entry reduced from 8 minutes to one minute; login time itself reduced from five minutes to less than 10 seconds
- Saved investment in Dynamics CRM
- Avoided enormous costs and saved waiting time required for upgrading network bandwidth
- Microsoft reputation and credibility was preserved

SIB's project was a crucial turning point in Accops' business direction.

"With this project, it has become clear that as an OEM we need to work with solution providers and solve business problems - not just deliver IT infrastructure products. Working together with CCentric and Microsoft, we've already found customers with similar problems and delivered the solution to Mahindra Finance Ltd. and Birla Sunlife Ltd., which are both BFSI organizations. We also tweaked our solution to suit the Dynamics CRM application, making sure the ROI from the Accops solution is delivered faster."

- Vijender Yadav, Chief Architect at Accops Systems.



HOW THIS ONE CLOUD OFFERING TRANSFORMED THE ENTIRE IT LANDSCAPE FOR CANADIAN SMALL BUSINESSES IN LESS THAN A YEAR!



SMBs Struggling with the Cloud

What type of business organizations are the most common contributors to the world's economy?

No, it is not large enterprises and corporations – it's small businesses with less than 25 employees!

However, their growth and sustainability depend largely on technology tools that can increase their productivity.

With 98 percent of Canadian organizations falling under the small business category, this market was struggling with the adoption of cloud technology. Microsoft's Office 365 stack seemed attractive, but hard to get for a typical SMB, mainly because there were almost no cloud offerings that were tailored for them.

Cloud solution providers (CSPs) seemed more interested in selling Office 365 to large enterprises.

Because of that, SMBs were suffering from:

- **Poor backup and recovery systems and data loss Cyber-attacks**
- **Slow and daunting onboarding process for Office 365**
- **Lack of the right Microsoft certifications and training**
- **Having no budget for expensive servers**

Focused on the “Small” Since 2005

Because of their intensive approach, which includes a high-level of free support and very close relationships with their partners, IT Cloud managed to change the entire landscape of cloud offerings for Canadian small businesses in only nine months!

Here's how it happened.

IT Cloud was “born in the cloud” and, for the last 13 years, was growing an extensive partner network with over 560 SMBs across Canada: IT resellers, Value-added Resellers (VARs) and Managed Service Providers (MSPs). Up until a year ago, IT Cloud was known primarily as the distributor of the supervised cloud backup solution, providing small businesses with continuum tools.

However, when they identified the struggles that SMBs are facing with productivity tools, IT Cloud felt they had to do something about it.

They reached out to Microsoft and expressed a will to distribute cloud productivity tools from the Microsoft stack specifically to SMBs. Microsoft, who didn't have a great track record of cloud solutions for small businesses, was thrilled to hear that. But, in order to get the distributor status, IT Cloud had to prove itself.

That's when they rolled up their sleeves, put together a new offer tailored to small businesses, and started an intensive campaign.

“IT Cloud demonstrates a caring attitude through their sales and tech support staff, backed by their easy-to-use web portal. Adding new clients or products is a breeze and ensures I can make sales or get support, any time of the day.”
Dean Mueller,
Infinity Business Solutions, Surrey, BC

“Five Star” Support and One Irresistible Offer

What really sets IT Cloud apart from similar companies is the top-notch support, on an every day basis, they offer their partners and customers.

Because of that approach, they had a 100% success rate in providing a supervised, monitored backup solution and their users never had an issue with restoring their files.

IT Cloud included the same type of close, intimate relationships with their partners in its new offering, which provided SMBs with Office 365 and Exchange Online.

Their partners got:

- **Full and free training on all O365 solutions**
- **Proprietary O365 portal with instant registration, one minute to download and configure the solution for a quick onboarding process**
- **Free IT, “five-star” support via direct phone contact**
- **Free migration support to the cloud, for any IT environment**
- **Creating a unique MSP-branded customer portal**
- **Bill on behalf – to simplify the administration work for partners, IT Cloud offers billing to end-customers on behalf of the partner, with the partner’s branding on the communications**
- **Free partner-branded marketing materials**

Win-Win-Win Solution

The campaign was a full success for all parties included.

In only nine months IT Cloud started to add 150 new customers per month.

SMBs finally got a chance to move toward the cloud in a much simpler way. Now they have:

- **Business continuity and business productivity tools in one place**
- **Simple onboarding process**
- **Ongoing education in Microsoft technologies**
- **Supreme IT support for partners and their customers**
- **Increased partner revenues ranging from 23 to 50 per cent growth**

Microsoft won with this offering too - more than 200 IT Cloud partners, who were not Microsoft partners before, started to sell Office 365. IT Cloud enabled the successful transfer of more than 8,600 seats from Advisors to CSPs.

Right now, IT Cloud registers more than 200 customers and between 1,500 and 1,800 net seats per month – all that in just over a year.

For IT Cloud itself, this campaign helped them reach 50 per cent company growth in the last two years.

However, the main gain for IT Cloud came through an exceptional Microsoft recognition.

After becoming the number one partner for both Net Customer Acquisition (NCA) and Net Seat Acquisition (NSA) out of 262 Microsoft Managed CSP Partners in Canada, in September 2017 IT Cloud earned the status of Microsoft’s 2-Tier Distributor for CSP.



“There are only about 30 CSP Distributors in the world and we are extremely proud to be a part of that selected group of Microsoft partners”, said David Latulippe, VP Business Development at IT Cloud.

TWO MICROSOFT PARTNERS AND ONE POWER BI SOLUTION IN A “MILLION-DOLLAR” BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION



It may come as a surprise that, in the digital era, sales of appointment books and paper planners are on the rise! According to research company NDP Group, paper planner sales increased by 10 percent from 2015 to 2016, while calendars increased by eight percent over the same time period. This trend continued recent years, especially on the Japanese and Chinese markets, as well as among Millennials in the Western world. “The Digital Age Kids” apparently nurture the pen-and-paper planner culture, despite the variety of modern devices they use every day.

Blue Sky The Color of Imagination LLC is a successful planner and calendar reseller from United States, offering their products mostly through Amazon, Walmart and Target, as well as other major online and offline retailers. They felt the paper planner popularity increase, however, time-consuming manual processes in data management hindered the company’s growth and productivity.

The Manual Frustration

Managing different sales figures and consumer information used to be a daily frustration for Blue Sky employees: each large retailer had a different portal and data had to be downloaded manually.

Also, every retailer names its data differently, so Blue Sky had to consolidate this information using Microsoft Access. Not only was that an additional manual process,

but it was also very limiting, as they could upload and report on very small portions of data (maximum two gigabytes).

If they wanted to go back to historical data and compare it against current information, that was another time-consuming, manual process, plus they didn’t have any insights into real-time data.

“It took them weeks to gather information, which is why the data was stale by the time they were looking at it,” said Weaver, adding, “It was very difficult to do any type of cost and inventory projections, or get an idea of trends in the marketplace.”

Without quality data insights and business projections, Blue Sky’s growth was stalled.

“Power(ed) BI” Partnership

IT Responsive was Blue Sky’s managed service provider for over a decade and, therefore, their first partner of choice for the new technological challenge.

“We understood the problem and were able to talk to a couple of different partners to find the right solution to solve their problem. We decided to partner up with Adeptek Consulting, which had done a lot of business for large companies such as Port of Los Angeles and had developed some really interesting Power BI solutions that were very similar to what Blue Sky was looking for,” said Weaver.

“Thanks to a Microsoft Power BI solution developed in a partnership between IT Responsive and Adeptek Consulting, Blue Sky has significantly grown in 2017. Due to annual savings of \$2.4 Million and highly effective data management, they could allocate their resources into brand promotion and focus on their own eCom-merce business, almost doubling their revenue in just one year.”
- Chance Weaver,
President of IT Responsive.

Microsoft Power BI was the most reasonable solution because Blue Sky was already using Microsoft Office 365. However, they were also using Sage ERP system from which they were exporting all of the data into a SQL database for creating reports.

Digitalized Data on a Colorful Dashboard

Through Power BI, the new solution was able to capture all information into a centralized database, change the naming convention for easier reporting and include the historical data.

The company is using a Microsoft Azure SQL database as the central repository for all of the data, where the process of gathering information into the system is now completely automated.

Now, Blue Sky employees can see their old and new data on a dashboard, also containing newest trends, from which they can create very accurate trend and order projections or estimate inventory requirements.

The Millions: Saving a Few and Earning a Dozen!

- One of the biggest wins of the new solution is the fact that **it saved the company about 2.4 million on an annual basis!** The savings were made in projecting inventory requirements and orders, which used to swirl with mistakes in the previous, manual practice.
- An even bigger “wow-effect” of the solution was an **increased ROI by almost 50 percent** – their profits grew from \$18 Million to \$30 Million over a period of only one year!
- What’s also interesting about Blue Sky is that it invested the saved amounts back into technology and the new solution! Because they were thrilled with how it improved their projections, they wanted to implement the same system into other parts of their busi-

ness, such as project management, which also had a challenging data management process. To gather all the information, rename everything, put it into the Access database, crunch the numbers, and create a small report on maybe one month of information, the previous process would take them about 116 hours. Now it is all automated and the reports come out with the click of a button.

- The new solution also enabled Blue Sky to **reallocate people that used to work inside the “reporting team” into more useful positions, such as design, purchasing, and inventory teams. Now they have only one employee assigned for reports, who understands Power BI well and creates extra dashboards for everyone.**

“The Blue Sky team attributes a large portion of their growth to the ability to have access to business critical data that they didn’t have before. It’s really exciting to see some of the things that have changed and some of the things that we can do with SQL and Power BI: it’s amazing!” Weaver said.

IT Responsive and AdepteK also count another type of win. They learned how important it is to keep a close relationship with their partner, where they nurtured fantastic communication and alignment of their project and implementation goals, while helping each other to ensure the best client experience.



“Due to our partnership, we have created referral programs and helped our partners to develop recurring revenue opportunities from a solution that was traditionally a one-off project,” Weaver concluded.

PETRALEX SOLUTION TO THE RESCUE FOR THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT



IT Training With a «Lost Signal»

Founded in 1991, the Computer Training Center «Specialist» has been known as the leading Russian institution for educational programs in software and technology, as well as the largest provider of the Microsoft Authorized Training Program.

In «Specialist», students have several learning options to choose from: classic classroom lessons, on-site or distance training, individual training, or webinar and on-line training.

Because of its different virtual and blended learning formats, Specialist's popularity grew year-over-year, increasing the number of students by 25 percent.

However, some of those students are people with hearing impairment. According to the World Health Organization's estimates, about 10 percent of people suffer from hearing loss.

For them, both traditional class-based and virtual learning environments – often based on video or audio tutorials – were very difficult to keep up with.

Students with hearing loss couldn't follow the lectures or participate in classes like their colleagues, which ultimately didn't bring them the results they could obtain, if they could have heard the teachers better.

And they didn't want to be treated as deaf people and placed in special groups because that is not who they are.

For IT professionals with hearing loss, this was a problem that affected their careers.

Without constant education in new technologies they might not be able to progress in their positions, and, ultimately, they could lose their jobs.

Difficulties in Hearing Clearly? There's an App for That!

As an independent IT consultant and trainer in Specialist CCT, Danil Dintsis heard about the challenges of students with hearing impairment and wanted to help.

Dintsis knew that his client IT4You had an awarded software solution - Petralex - that works as a hearing aid in various situations.

“Because this hearing application operates in real-time mode, I knew that Petralex could help Specialist's students during classes, whether they are participating online or offline,” said Danil Dintsis.

With their strong R&D team, IT4You started to adjust Petralex to the needs of Specialist's students, both as an asynchronous and a synchronous solution.

“The Specialist CCT is always on the edge of technology, and we are happy to help people with impaired hearing to grow in their profession. Our most valuable benefit in this project is the social responsibility and worldwide recognition of its value,” says Dmitry Gudzenko, CEO at Specialist CCT.

Desktop & Mobile Audio Amplifier

IT4You developed a special solution for hearing difficulties by implementing Petralex hearing aid and Petralex driver.

The Petralex hearing aid implements smartphones and tablets as hearing aids, and students can use it for class studies. Petralex desktop driver adapts digital audio (including streamed audio) to a student's personal hearing profile.

The solution is made both for:

- **Mobile devices, where it works as a hearing aid substitute - using proprietary algorithms it can test hearing capabilities in both the left and right ears and then adjust the sound amplifications accordingly.**
- **Desktops, where it uses Microsoft Team Foundation Server integrated into Windows Audio System and acts as a virtual audio driver.**

The Petralex driver is based on the principle of real-time digital audio transformation. After a person takes a simple in-situ hearing test, Petralex provides smart amplification of audio signals according to the person's hearing profile.

The best part – students with hearing impairment could use the software at no extra cost!

More Than 500 Students Fully Integrated into Virtual Learning

The partnership between IT4You and Specialist CCT brought significant improvements for about 500 students with hearing impairment during the first year.

Thanks to the Petralex solution, they can now focus on training and learning, instead of trying to “decode” what has been said during class.

And that means about three percent higher salaries for hearing impaired people, after they have completed their training and improved their skills.

Even though this project is primarily a demonstration of social sensitivity and care, Specialist CCT had some gains for its own company.

Since the word about Petralex being successfully integrated into educational programs spread, there has been an increase in IT professionals with hearing loss taking Specialist's training programs by three percent.

Since the solution that IT4You developed and adjusted for the needs of Specialist CCT is free for downloading, the word about its value and availability has crossed Russian borders.

Universities in Spain and Morocco are now using Petralex too, providing extra capabilities for students with hearing loss.



THE POWER OF A TRIPLE ALLIANCE: WHEN COMPLEMENTARY SKILLS AND DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIES UNITE



Within a short time-frame, **ACA Global** managed to become a notable technology expert that serves large enterprises in India with a full stack of Microsoft Dynamic solutions. It all started with three separate companies with different skill sets, where each covered a specific region:

- **Affordable Business Solutions - ABS** from South India - proficient in ERP,
- **Acxiom Consulting** based in North India -developing a strong AX practice,
- **Compusoft Advisors** from West India - experts in CRM.

They decided to combine their complementary skills and forge an alliance, now present across India with offices in nine cities. Agappe Diagnostics Ltd. was the break-through case for this alliance.

Where Is My Sales Team?

Agappe Diagnostics is a large and fast-growing health-care company from South India. Well known for its in vitro diagnostics, the company is also present in domestic and international markets as an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).

While the company had already started their digital transformation journey, modernising financial and inventory departments by implementing Microsoft Dynamics NAV, they were using a local Sales Force application which did not fulfill their desire for a world class Sales Force solution.

Working with over 300 different distributors, Agappe

used multiple solutions to keep track of activity and performance among the 450-strong sales field force, which translated into three major challenges:

- **Disparate systems to track whether employees covered the area specified in their planned routes, created on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis**
- **Limited functionalities to enable the sales force to submit a daily activity report providing their managers with necessary insights**
- **Inability to link communication between the employees in the field and their sales managers**

Identifying the above shortfalls in the existing applications, they were scouting for a world class solution to meet their growth expectations and to introduce better tracking systems.

The Perfect “Dynamics Bunch”

Agappe Diagnostics, being an ABS Customer, approached them to assist in their CRM Solution finalization. Compusoft Advisors offered to extend their support in fulfilling the requirement with their expertise in Microsoft CRM and stepped in.

This initiative became the turning point for the convergence of the three companies, Compusoft Advisors, Acxiom Consulting and Affordable Business Solutions. The timing was perfect, as Microsoft had just announced their focus on Dynamics products, launching Dynamics 365 with integrated CRM, NAV and AX in the same solution.

“The success of the Agappe Diagnostics project resulted in a great partnership, which led us to create new joint offerings, spread to new markets, and win bigger deals where we can now compete with business giants such as Price Water House Cooper or IBM.”
– Devesh Aggarwal, CEO, Compusoft Advisors

South India comprises many different local dialects, in which customers prefer to communicate. This makes language a major barrier for companies from other parts of the country. With South Indian ABS on board, the language issue was eliminated, and the three partners could work together on the new Aggape CRM solution.

The three companies came together to set up ACA Global an alliance between the three companies with complementary skill sets and the ability to operate pan - India. That is how the ACA Global alliance was born.

CRM Roll-Out Within 30 Days

Agappe was able to see the benefits of the first phase within a short time. The sales team also adapted to the application quickly. They have now initiated the 2nd phase extending the application to the services and other modules.

To connect the data from ERP and CRM solutions, ACA Global created a single platform in Microsoft Dynamics that met all the requirements from Aggape Diagnostics and beat the Salesforce solution offering with better pricing, thanks to Microsoft's subscription model.

"We had already developed some models which layered onto CRM, covering computer planning and onboarding processes, because we had done something similar for other consumable industries," said Aggarwal.

50 Percent Faster Deployment for a Faster ROI

The customer had the full fledged solution ready within 60 days, a 50 percent faster CRM deployment time than the usual practice. They are confident that this will translate into faster ROI from Online CRM, because the subscription starts on the first day after signing the order. With ACA Global's quick solution deployment, Aggape saved two months of licensing costs, which is almost 20 percent of the annual expense.

The single platform, with integrated ERP and CRM, improved workflow and simplified data collection.

Finally, the sales force could plan and be well-prepared, so each employee knew their tasks on a given day or week. Today with an integrated solution, Agappe is able to plan their sales much better and accelerate their decision-making process due to real time information with an integrated ERP and CRM.

Joint Offering Equals Growth

With experience in the Agappe project, ACA Global developed a complete supply chain solution for the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector and the Healthcare industry. They have also started to perform PoCs (Proof of Concept) in the SIM Card industry. ACA Global has built a powerful team of 300 Dynamic professionals and currently has a combined strength of more than 500 active Dynamic customers across India.

"Our alliance is a perfect example of how partners in the Microsoft ecosystem can obtain growth when combining complementary skills and services, as well as different geographies. Not only does this open cross-selling opportunities in our existing client base, it also attracts new customers from areas where we weren't individually present," Aggarwal concluded.



Our team supported the ABS team to give confidence to the customer on our expertise in CRM and ability to customize the application to meet their requirements. This combination helped us deliver the first phase of the project within 30 days," Devesh Aggarwal explained.

INTERNAL CHALLENGE THAT GREW INTO AN AZURE-BASED, DIGITAL MANAGEMENT INNOVATION USED WORLDWIDE



Business Idea Propelled “Inside-Out”

The number one business advice on building a successful company is to meet a demonstrated need in the market or – simply put – to solve an existing problem. One such company is MediaValet, which developed much needed, cloud-based digital asset management services for leading brands, across a wide variety of industries.

However, what’s interesting is the fact that the founders of MediaValet built its solution not by looking at the market needs first, but by taking an “inside-out approach” solving their internal challenges in digital asset management.

As it turned out soon after, other companies with a large volume of various digital assets shared the same problems, so the solution now serves clients across North America, Europe, Asia and Pacific.

This is the story of how MediaValet came to be and how its innovation quickly expanded, thanks to **Microsoft Azure** and their IT partner **Long View Systems**.

Browsing Terabytes of Data for a Single Image

MediaValet was born out of VRX Studios, known as one of the largest photography providers for 8,000 international hotel and hospitality chains, with clients like Expedia and Hilton hotels.

The business was flourishing, however, with the increased volume of their customers’ digital assets, after a couple of years they could no longer successfully archive, secure and manage over 20 TBs of high-definition photos, videos, virtual tours and interactive maps.

Whenever they got a request from a client to find a specific photo “from last year” they would get lost in time-consuming, manual processes that required a dedicated person on the team able to spend hours on tracking and finding a specific asset.

“With the trend of content growth, simple solutions like email and file sharing cannot effectively organize and utilize the assets in the creative process. It becomes the bottle-neck for companies in retail, higher education, agencies – any organization that is leveraging photos, videos and content to grow their business.”

– **Maria Osipova**, VP Marketing, MediaValet

Requests started to come up consistently as more and more customers from around the world wanted to access their accumulated digital documents.

VRX Studios was trying to resolve this challenge with a solution built on top of existing systems, where they spent two years of research and invested around \$500,000. However, their attempts fell short every time and the problem persisted.

“Thanks to Microsoft Azure and the open source technologies we employ, we’re successfully competing against the leaders of the legacy digital asset management industry and rapidly growing both our market share and our revenue.”

– **Jean Lozano**,
CTO of MediaValet

Azure to the Rescue

Just around that time, Microsoft Azure launched their Platform-as-a-Service infrastructure. Jean Lozano from VRX Studio quickly realized that, rather than spending another round of \$500,000 or more, they could architect the solution on Azure.

Even though the idea of this type of content management has been in play for about 30 years, evolving from the workflow in the publishing industry, VRX Studio was the first to build it on a Microsoft Azure platform.

As a knowledgeable reseller experienced in Microsoft licensing and managed services, Long View Systems was chosen as an implementation partner. What LVS provided was great insight into customers' needs and an implementation strategy that could evolve and function across the entire company as a part of their revenue centre.

“Born in the Cloud Solution”, Turned New Company

VRX Studios' growing digital asset management challenges compelled the company to create a system that could handle tens of millions of photos, videos and graphic files. Also, it needed to:

- Provide access to clients and photographers from all over the world,
- Manage access and usage rights for hundreds of thousands of users,
- Ensure strict rights management and version control, and
- Enable full redundancy and high security.

VRX Studios called their new “digital asset management” system MediaValet™ and launched the first version (1.0) in late 2010.

In the latest release of MediaValet (3.0), the interface is offered as a single page app. This was created using AngularJS and is run on an Azure website with Node.js. MediaValet implemented FFmpeg, an open source transcoding tool, to enable users to download files in the required formats and sizes.

FFmpeg converts photos, videos, audio and other such media files, on-the-fly, into the required formats and sizes - providing far more flexibility than a commercial transcoding service.

Within days of launching, VRX had interest from other companies who wanted to use MediaValet to manage their own digital assets and, at the same time, Microsoft recognized the great potential of the solution in its multi-tenant functionality.

By 2014, the market for VRX's digital asset management solution was outgrowing the market for VRX's other services and MediaValet was spun out into a separate company.

MediaValet's Transformational Benefits

What companies gain after the MediaValet's deployment is:

- Dramatically lowered costs, thanks to Microsoft Azure's global, Platform-as-a-Service infrastructure and its support of open-source technologies
- ROI increase, regarding investment in content, for which MediaValet released a helpful tool that can calculate those figures, called The ROI Calculator
- Highest security standards that keep documents safe in the Azure cloud

Together, MediaValet and Long View Systems helped several customers to transform their digital media management, as well as their workflow.

One of them was the **Canadian Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APAGA)**. The organization had an outdated file sharing system, which caused difficulties in managing, viewing and sharing in 2D, 3D, and engineering files across the association and with external parties.

After the solution deployment, APEGA's 200 employees significantly increased their productivity enhancing benefits from their Office 365 integration, as well as the new Adobe CC connector and Hootsuite connector.

Another customer was **ATB Financial** in Calgary, Canada, which identified an urgent need to implement a new Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution, choosing MediaValet's innovative approach.

During IT review the deal became a part of the technology stack behind the re-launch of ATB's website, integrated as part of their marquee element, along with their Sitecore CMS.

Risk That Payed Off

With its global footprint, low pricing structure and robust feature set, MediaValet is leading the new, cloud-based, digital asset management industry.

Jean Lozano concludes, “Selling our legacy business and focusing on the youngest, smallest part of our company was a major, and some would say risky, decision. In our minds, it was easy and we haven't looked back since.”



“CHATTY” SOLUTION THAT SIMPLIFIES THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF MANUFACTURING



Manufacturing in the Era of Cloud

Not all manufacturing companies are ready for the type of digital transformation that includes new machinery investment and employee training. Many manufacturers have old machines that are still working very well, and don't really need to be replaced.

However, in the era of the cloud and Big Data, manufacturers with older plants cannot keep up with new trends. Typically, they struggle with collecting and processing data from devices, connecting them to the cloud, or keeping the facilities safe from cyber-attacks.

And if they don't digitalize their systems soon enough, they may lose their competitive advantage.

On the other hand, a number of manufacturers have already invested in new machinery and started the automatization of processes to move from mass production to customized production.

But they have challenges too: how to connect new equipment to the cloud and – in Italy specifically – what type of IT investment to choose to gain tax relief?

Namely, with the intention of supporting the Industry 4.0, the Italian Government provides cash-back for companies that make new investments: 250 percent of the entire investment as tax credits for cloud-enabled goods.

Into the Cloud With SoftJam

Whether the machines are old or new, a cloud-connected solution is “a must” for Italian manufacturers. Some of them are looking for software that could speed up the modernization process without the need for new machinery acquisition. Others want to enhance their new plants.

With its 20-years' experience on the IT scene, SoftJam was a logical partner of choice for several Italian manufacturing companies. Always striving towards cutting-edge technologies, SoftJam incorporated Microsoft products five years ago, growing its cloud traffic to over \$6M in revenue on the Italian market.

With such a strong reference, its 360-degree service, and a software product that solves different challenges among manufacturers, SoftJam was recognized as the top solution provider to bring the idea of the simple digitalization of manufacturing to life.

“Hi, Machine! How Are You?”

Inspired by the Millennials' messaging trend and the chatting method used worldwide, SoftJam developed a cloud-connected chat platform that enables manufacturers to talk to their machines.

An integrated chat bot uses natural language to answer questions such as the list of available machines on site,

“With BOT Jam, manufacturers can give a second life to their existing plants. With new equipment connected to the cloud through BOT Jam, Italian manufacturers can exploit the tax return that government offers for new IT investments.”

- Luca Franzi, Sales Director of SoftJam.

the status of a specific device, number of products, and many more.

Inter-connected with all the Microsoft tools, BOT Jam is integrated with Power Bi, which enables manufacturers to have a visualized and graphical form of analyzed data uploaded in a web portal.

Based on the Microsoft PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) architecture and Azure cloud, BOT Jam guarantees reliability and scalability that enables the “always connected” type of inter-communication.

The solution captures the data about who signed in to the platform throughout the day, which gives management vital information about what the operators are doing and what needs to be harmonized in the organization.

The status of machines in any plant is collected on a single platform and available on any device. Users can remotely monitor several different facilities and check their energy resources, the effectiveness of the machines, maintenance, and even compare the production lines among plants.

IoT Hub is used for real-time data insights and SQL Database server for storage.

Five Key Business and Operational Benefits:

- **Increased operational efficiency** – by connecting plant machinery to the cloud and interacting with them through a single BOT Jam platform, the manufacturers can discover critical information in real-time.
- **Time savings** - no need for specialized training of the staff because the platform is easy to handle and resembles simple messenger apps; employees can start to use it on the first day. Also, the deployment of the solution is done in one week, while other more complex solutions may take months to be integrated.
- **Cost-savings** – thanks to Azure capabilities, BOT Jam is a pay-per-use solution that spends only the amount of data that is being used, supporting the CAPEX financial model.
- **Remote access** – the software gives the ability to compare the state of machines located in several different plants and track their performance simultaneously.
- **High security** - with the new infrastructure in the Azure cloud, all shared data is highly protected, mitigating the risk of cyber-attacks to the customer's database.

BOT Jam is currently a pilot project at four large Italian manufacturers: three “food giants” and one from the energy sector.

All of them report that chats with their machines improved their workflow and shared the excitement in taking one step closer towards the transformation of their plants into smart factories.



FROM A SINKING VESSEL TO A BUSINESS DOUBLED IN SIZE WITH MICROSOFT FORMS



According to Kaspersky, companies experienced a ransomware attack every 40 seconds, which was three times more often than in 2016.

Even though ransomware became a profitable “business” and the number of attacks multiplies each year, companies still hope that they won’t make the black statistics – until it happens to them.

Infrastructure Engineers (a California-based infrastructure engineering company) was one of this year’s victims and lost its server in the attack, along with the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that was installed on it.

The consequences were devastating – the organization’s entire data management vanished in one day!

In the following months, the company struggled with business management and began to lose money. Some of the contractors were laid off. The worst-case scenario, in which management would have to shut down the business, was rapidly approaching.

What Infrastructure Engineers desperately needed was a technology solution that would “stop the bleeding” and manage its personnel and all of their project work.

As an engineering company, everything they do is project-based, so the organization’s biggest business challenge was to keep track of which employee did what on a particular project. As employees are paid at different hourly rates, without the ERP system, they couldn’t manage payrolls successfully.

The easiest way to solve that challenge was to buy a new ERP system, which would cost at least \$60,000 for licensing and implementation.

The trouble was – the company’s financial stability had been flagging for months, and they couldn’t afford it.

But the clock was ticking, and management needed something on the books, just to survive.

Creative Side of Office 365

After three months going downhill, when it was clear that the engineering company was rapidly moving towards bankruptcy, they called PartnerSource Solutions and asked for help.

PartnerSource brought a multi-disciplinary team in partnership with Strategic Systems Group and Companybuilt, which collectively have a long history of business information and ERP knowledge and expertise.

Since Infrastructure Engineers was already using Office 365, the three Microsoft partners sat down to explore how they could use existing software to handle the situation. And then, in a brainstorming session, they had an “Aha!” moment – the new solution will use capabilities of Microsoft Forms that would allow them to digitally capture all the information the company needed and access data through any device.

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”
– Winston Churchill

That capability was something Infrastructure Engineers didn't have in their legacy system, with their data being exchanged only through email and paper.

In other words, the disaster with the ransomware came with a "silver-lining" for the engineering company.

Now Infrastructure Engineers can digitally capture information on who is working on which project and how many hours they have spent through Microsoft Forms, which uploads data to Excel, and ultimately to their payroll system and the QuickBooks accounting software. The solution was further supported by backup and recovery software that protected the company from new ransomware so that the same loss doesn't happen again.

The new solution was created and deployed in six weeks- the company started to work with it during the summer months, and by autumn they had their first results.

From (Almost) Zero to Hero

By successfully replacing the functionalities of an ERP system, the new solution based on Microsoft Forms was much more than just a tool for stemming the tide.

It allowed the company to turn the corner, get back to profitability, and even increase the number of projects they took on. Infrastructure Engineers are now expanding again; they are hiring additional people, and are back on the growth side!

In the beginning, the year 2017 looked pretty bad for Infrastructure Engineers, but after this simple solution deployment, they finished it by almost doubling their workforce. Previously the company had 32 employees, and the number was shrinking; now there are 59 employees, plus nine contractors.

The sinking company was rescued from drowning and set up for new success!

Also, the solution brought benefits for the three IT partners as well by:

- **Expanding their skillset in adding Microsoft Forms;**
- **Solidifying the partnership, where the three companies now engage in joint marketing activities and are looking for new opportunities together; and,**
- **Initiating a new, more holistic approach to challenges that they are solving for the customers, where they can offer a much broader suite of solutions and services as partners than they ever could individually.**

PartnerSource, Strategic Systems Group, and Company-built proved how complex problems can sometimes be solved with the simplest of solutions – with a pinch of willingness to help and a handful of creative thinking.



"With the challenge in front of us, we had to be creative and think out-of-the-box to develop a solution that could provide similar Project Management capabilities for small dollars," said Eric Klauss, President of PartnerSource Solutions.



CLOUD MIGRATION THAT TRANSFORMED A REAL-ESTATE BUSINESS

Monitoring, collecting and processing different types of data in managing office properties is a challenge when information is stored in different locations. It's hard to improve productivity when data about rent payments and property maintenance, energy consumption per building or other similar information is not available in a single place. Not to mention the costs of running various data center.

A large, Swedish real-estate company **Humlegården Fastigheter AB** had that problem. Their business is acquiring, refining, renovating, and managing office properties but their data was scattered on old, on-premises data centers, where each building that they led had its server.

In total, they had to deal with 76 servers across the same number of buildings!

Their IT department had to serve all those buildings, which generated large expenses in personnel and hardware, plus they were working with software tools from the 1990s.

With this type of IT environment, Humlegården knew they could not remain competitive and productive, develop new offerings, or introduce innovation. On top of

all that - they were losing money on unnecessary equipment and staff.

The company wanted to move the data from their own on-premises data center to the cloud and to get rid of the excessive hardware.

Single Platform Instead of 76 Servers

In search of a solution to their pain, Humlegården asked top-notch Swedish IT companies for help: consulting expert **Lumagate** and their long-time support and operations partner **Ironstone AB**.

While Lumagate provided the customer with the right architecture of the new data infrastructure, Ironstone AB did the “heavy-lifting” ensuring support, managed services, operations and monitoring, while also taking care of the data migration to the cloud.

The approach of the two partners included comprehensive solutions that would create a single platform, using Office 365, Intune, System Centre and Microsoft Azure.

The platform ensured security and flexibility, with the anytime/anywhere/any device capabilities, which had an

*“The migration was not easy, and we were carefully planning the ultimate path towards the Cloud. First, we created a single platform in the Cloud where all the data from 76 servers was ultimately migrated”
- said Peter Backman, CEO of Ironstone AB.*



immediate impact on customer's productivity.

In parallel with the concept of the platform, partners started the transformation of the 76 data centres from on-premise environments to the cloud.

Proactive Service with Only Two IT Employees

The most prominent impact of the new solution was increased productivity of the IT department which has significantly reduced its staff and costs, while customer support gained a new and enhanced working mode.

Namely, IT support managed to extend its working hours and act immediately and proactively when an issue occurred, which previously required several days.

Because Ironstone AB is now in-charge of the monitoring and managing of IT services, problems can be spotted and resolved in a couple of hours, even before end users notice that there is a problem.

For example, in the last year, Humlegården had a couple of severe incidents. One time an entire on-premises database went down, while on another occasion surveillance cameras in some buildings stopped working. Thanks to the new solution, the problems were fixed in record speed, saving the company both significant expenses and their reputation.

After the solution deployment Humlegården gained:

- **A single place of reference – a new platform - for all the data on building maintenance, rent payment, etc., replacing 76 different data centers**

- **Reduced number of IT staff and expenses – Humlegården now employs only two experts: IT manager and a CTO**
- **Extension of service desk hours from 6:30 am to 10pm (before it was from 8 am to 5 pm)**
- **Incident team that solves sudden incidents in a couple of hours**
- **Proactive improved IT service - they know something is wrong, before end users**

“We developed an ‘Incident team’ that takes care of any issue in a concise time frame. Before, a single employee of the IT department was in charge of all the possible problems among the 76 buildings, and could not provide a fast reaction and, ultimately, customer satisfaction. Now, if anything happens during or after the office hours and even on weekends, we handle it within two hours,” Backman explained.

Humlegården is now all set for new business success and, thanks to their new IT solution, they continue to grow and digitally transform their company.



“The combination of Office365, Intune and Azure is pretty strong, and with our partner at the frontline of technology, as well as our expertise that can deal with complex environments, we are now jointly providing customers with high-class managed services,” said Backman.



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