



Azure Northwest Builds Foundation for Accelerated Growth with Microsoft Dynamics Solution

The Challenge

Azure Northwest's growth was outpacing QuickBooks, and it needed to integrate back office accounting data to its BuildTopia homebuilding software to replace manually-driven processes.

Solution

Azure Northwest worked with DC Technology Group, LLC to assess business processes, uncover opportunities to gain efficiencies, and selected Microsoft Dynamics SL integrated with BuildTopia to gain better control over their data.

Benefits

- Doubled business size without adding employees
- Reduced a 12-click invoice double-entry process to 3-clicks
- Successfully trained employees remotely
- A low-cost alternative to other homebuilding-centered accounting systems with as much functionality
- Ability to generate better reports
- Added efficiency and eliminated data entry errors
- Can now approve and process 100 invoices in only 10 minutes
- Managing 13 companies with asset allocation tool

Client Overview



INDUSTRY: Construction and Homebuilding

LOCATION: Federal Way, Washington

SYSTEM: Microsoft Dynamics SL

Azure Northwest (not to be confused with Microsoft Azure) builds homes made solely for the place they live: the Northwest. They know the seasons and love the variety — from blue-sky summer days to rain-soaked winter nights. Azure Northwest manages land acquisition, development, and homebuilding projects.



Supporting Growth

Although a young company in business for only two years, Azure Northwest had already outgrown its use of QuickBooks, and the team was frustrated with the inability to integrate QuickBooks with BuildTopia, its online homebuilding software. “We couldn’t access the reporting we needed to see on a daily basis, budgeting was tough, and the integration between the two systems just wasn’t happening, which meant we were spending a lot of time hand-keying information,” says Sheri Cuellar, controller for Azure Northwest. The team at Azure expressed QuickBooks’ limitations with BuildTopia, and they recommended DC Technology Group and Microsoft Dynamics SL as a solution that would easily integrate.

Microsoft Dynamics SL

“I just about fell out of my chair when I saw the low cost for Microsoft Dynamics SL software plus consulting, which is about 1% the cost of other homebuilding accounting systems that I’ve worked with in the past,” says Cuellar. “And I’d say the functionality is comparable, which delights me.” DC Technology Group implemented Microsoft Dynamics SL, integrated with BuildTopia, and go-live was within just three months. Azure is utilizing all the financial and project modules, as well as web apps in a hosted environment.

Multi-company with intercompany processing was hugely important to Azure, as it manages 13 different companies for development and homebuilding. To further eliminate double-entry on the projects side, DC Technology Group wrote a program dubbed “allocator” which allocates cost to each of the 13 companies, and also provides an “all-up” number for accounting at the parent company. “For example, one of our companies may purchase

a raw piece of land, or a finished lot, and our construction company may carry out the ‘sticks and bricks’ portion of the homebuilding and manage subcontractors...while another may sell the finished home,” explains Cuellar. “The cost associated with each step needs to be reported on the books and records of each individual company, and the ‘allocator’ built by DC Technology Group helps us determine how much it costs to build each home, or each community as a whole.”

Additional complexities for Azure were in the areas of unique sales tax laws in Washington state, and budgeting requirements. “Sales and use tax is reported differently in Washington state than any other state, and if it’s not tracked the correct way, it’s a huge deal if you’re audited,” says Cuellar. “While the sales tax functions well for billing and AR in SL out of the box, I had to find a work-around on the AP side,” continues Cuellar.

As far as budgeting requirements, Azure users wanted to see budgeting reports in a very specific way, so specialized reports had to be written. “DC Technology Group is very receptive to writing reports for us, and we are happy with the budgeting reports that have been written thus far, says Cuellar. “More reports are currently being designed internally to be written in the near future by DC Technology Group.”

DC Technology Group completed training for Azure remotely, which was very cost effective. “DC Technology Group has been extremely helpful during our partnership with them, and I always feel that they are leading us down the right path,” says Cuellar. “Support has been tremendous. The team at DC Technology Group has been excellent and responsive. We can call them or communicate via email, and we always get an answer.”



System Benefits

Right off the bat, the SL/BuildTopia integration was the most immediate reward for Azure. “The integration works flawlessly for the most part, and since homebuilding is 90% of our business, this is a huge deal for us,” says Cuellar. Additionally, Azure has doubled in size since using SL, and has not had to add additional staff. “We are 100% if not 120% more productive,” says Cuellar. “Double-entry and manual-entry has been eliminated, drastically reducing coding errors,” continues Cuellar. “We are able to generate much better reports, which is hugely important for us. We are better managing the business, budgets, and margins, and have fine-tuned our processes and procedures. SL makes it easy to manage our growth and track feasibility costs.”

Azure can now approve and process 100 invoices in just 10 minutes and has eliminated a 12-click process to just three clicks when creating an invoice from billings. “And the only reason there are three clicks is that we are being nice and using the invoice number they’ve given us instead of forcing our PO number on them as the invoice number,” laughs



Cuellar. “Additionally, the Allocator program runs in the background and is wonderful,” continues Cuellar. “Our homebuilding manager is very happy with the SL/BuildTopia integration...it makes his life easier, and he’s much more comfortable with the true cost of each home now.”

Azure is also happy with the web apps portion of SL. “The web apps functionality is great for people who need access to data without having to buy a full license for them,” says Cuellar. “Our project managers, purchasing agent, and homebuilding principle use it a lot. They are able to get to reporting, and it does function even when our servers are down.”

Solutions’ Path

Azure is considering Microsoft BI360 for extended reporting and business analytics. “I would definitely recommend SL to another small business, especially for the efficiencies gained at such a low price point,” says Cuellar. “There is great potential for companies looking to downgrade or reallocate staff, or just grow exponentially without too much pain like we did.”

Ready to grow your business?

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