

Furniture Manufacturer Will Build Its Future on Integrated Microsoft Dynamics AX

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23/05/2008 12:43 (4 Day 23:06 minutes ago)

The FINANCIAL -- [Microsoft](#) Corp. on May 22 announced that American of Martinsville, a Virginia-based contract furniture manufacturer, will closely integrate [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX 4.0 and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM 4.0 to automate its current manual processes and significantly improve its master-planning capabilities.

American of Martinsville designs and produces furniture for the hospitality, healthcare and senior-living markets.

Microsoft Dynamics AX, which will improve the accuracy and speed of the company's planning, scheduling and purchasing, is an adaptable business-management solution that provides powerful, role-based, industry-specific functionality for midsize and larger organizations.

[Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM, which the company will use to automate its quoting process, project management and customer communications, provides powerful, role-based customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities.

American of Martinsville is working with two [Microsoft](#) Gold Certified Partners: Sunrise Technologies, of Winston-Salem, N.C., with its deep expertise in [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX, and Customer Effective Inc., of Greenville, S.C., which specializes in [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM. The two [Microsoft](#) Dynamics solutions will be tightly integrated so that workflow for the front-end and back-end operations of American of Martinsville runs seamlessly, from the order-entry phase all the way through design, master planning, production and delivery.

Before choosing [Microsoft](#), American of Martinsville had also evaluated solutions from SYSPRO, Sage Software Inc., SAP AG and Infor. The company selected [Microsoft](#) to replace its 28-year-old Unisys mainframe system with applications that had been developed in-house.

The mainframe system required use of many manual spreadsheet processes with multiple databases for the same information, necessitating duplicate data entry across the company, accompanied by the inherent issues of human error and sluggish workflow. The furniture design process was not connected to manufacturing and delivery. With [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM, all aspects of the operation will work harmoniously, sharing integrated data. The company also will implement [Microsoft](#) Office SharePoint Server to take advantage of the business portal capability of [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX, along with [Microsoft](#) Office PerformancePoint Server to provide analytics from the data. Also integrated into system is a Vertex sales-tax solution.

To take advantage of this integration, American of Martinsville and Sunrise Technologies are implementing a number of [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX 4.0 modules, including financials,

e-banking, planning and scheduling, order management, shipping and warehousing, purchasing, inventory, multicurrency and multilanguage capabilities, Enterprise Portal, and field service. For [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM, working with Customer Effective, the company is implementing modules for project management, quote management and customer communications.

"Microsoft Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM work together as the most flexible system for our needs, and they provide a lot of functionality out of the box," said Yuri Romero, vice president of Information Technology at American of Martinsville. "With [Microsoft](#) Dynamics solutions, we will be able to do more business with the same number of people, handle more transactions, have better control of our information, and be more proactive in catching problems early in the process."

"Microsoft Dynamics CRM will be the catalyst for the front-end processes — using standard functionality to manage interaction with customers and their agents, to document conversations and follow-up, and to schedule workflow and activities," said Michael Pereira, general manager for Sunrise Technologies. "Microsoft Dynamics AX picks up at the point of order entry to automate tasks associated with master scheduling, supply-chain planning and purchasing."

The integration of [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM enables American of Martinsville to gain new capabilities in critical areas:

- Support for company growth. By replacing manual work with automated processes, American of Martinsville will be able to meet the demands of additional business. The company produces a large percentage of its products in China, and the capabilities of [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM enable the company to use Asian currency and the Mandarin language when managing

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projects that the company produces in China.

- **Improved accuracy.** Elimination of manual processes and duplication of data entry will result in fewer mistakes than before. With a single database, everyone in the company now can work from the same, up-to-date version of documents and reports. In addition, the company expects to benefit from an accurate plan for purchasing materials, resulting in accurate inventories and cost savings from reducing obsolete inventory.
- **Faster, real-time reporting.** Instead of requesting and waiting for printed reports from a mainframe, employees can simply query the new database and obtain up-to-date information on their computer screens. All the data in the system can be retrieved directly, through the Web, in reports or through the [Microsoft](#) Office PerformancePoint Server for business analytics, offering more options more rapidly. Furthermore, executives will gain visibility to open projects, track their progress and make decisions with help from a dashboard view of all open projects that shows their status, success rates and dollar amounts. Replacing previously manually written reports, the [Microsoft](#) technology will provide reports on projected schedules, purchase plans and inventory targets.
- **Time savings.** With its old technology, when working with its Shanghai logistics office, the company needed to recompile spreadsheets and enter them into the home-office system. With [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX, however, Shanghai personnel will be able to enter information into the system directly through the Web or terminal services, reducing the steps required to complete logistics arrangements.
- **Revenue improvement.** Because [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM will permit American of Martinsville sales staff to do a better job of tracking and following up on leads than its previous technology allowed, the company expects to convert more leads to customers. Previously, follow-up required locating and examining a number of spreadsheets and consolidating the information into yet another spreadsheet. Quote management in [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM allows follow-up of quotes by amount, customer and other variables simply by drawing on the digital database. Sales reporting from [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM also is expected to provide better information to target specific businesses and follow up with them effectively.
- **Better planning.** Planning of materials needed for each project, of scheduling production and delivery, and of forecasting sales and inventory now will be available with [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX. American of Martinsville keeps furniture in inventory that will be delivered when, for example, a hotel chain opens a new location. The [Microsoft](#) technology will allow the company to forecast its inventory needs accurately and thereby carry out better production planning for the year than it could do before.
- **Support for IT.** Previously, when a manager needed an ad hoc report that had not been programmed into the mainframe, the company's IT staff had to create a program to extract the data and present it as needed. Now, with the user able to generate queries through [Microsoft](#) Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM, the demand on IT resources will be reduced significantly.

"When we entered the enterprise resource planning (ERP) selection process, we re-engineered our business processes, which now require a high degree of integration that we didn't have before," Romero said. "Microsoft Dynamics AX gives us that integration right out of the box, without the need to write programs. Along with [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM, it will be the tool to support our company's continued process improvement and will be the enabler for helping us transform the way we run our business."

American of Martinsville anticipates that [Microsoft](#) Dynamics solutions will streamline its processes from start to finish, allowing the company to become much more efficient.

"Manufacturers like American of Martinsville are realizing the enormous business value of connecting their sales, design and ordering processes directly with their production and delivery operations to gain powerful improvements in speed, accuracy, business intelligence and customer satisfaction," said Michael Park, corporate vice president for [Microsoft](#)'s U.S. Dynamics business. "Microsoft Dynamics AX and [Microsoft](#) Dynamics CRM offer the flexibility and seamless integration that make these benefits possible."



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