

Aiken Promotions

Enterprise Resource Planning & Financials

AIKENPROMOTIONSRegion
IrelandSector
Events Management

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The financial challenges of a concert promoter are varied and unique, from settling accounts post-show at multiple venues to making the numbers add up in business. All were addressed by signing up for Microsoft Dynamics NAV as a software-as-a-service solution.

THE PROBLEM

Aiken Promotions is Ireland's longest established concert promoter and event organiser, with staff in two offices, one in Dublin and another in Belfast. Back in 2007, when the recession was just starting to hit, the firm was as focussed as any business on getting a better grip on cash flow and more visibility of the bottom line.

Financial controller Adrian Ryan was already exacerbated with an accounts package that was inflexible and not particular user friendly. Run from an on-premise server, it also placed unnecessary demands on the firm's limited inhouse resources. Ryan is responsible for IT investments and was keen to explore the emerging cloud computing market that could relieve the business of the responsibility of managing and maintaining servers and software.

Software-as-a-service could also meet the unusual demands of Aiken. "Gigs happen anywhere, and you have to have immediate access to financial

information," he explained. "With some acts we settle he shows with touring accountants on the night of the show, sometimes transferring the money then and there."

The firm required a user-friendly ERP solution that could be accessed anywhere and give the business better reporting capabilities, recognising that greater visibility of business transactions would be crucial for riding out the recession. Everything pointed to Microsoft.

"Everyone other than our graphics department operates on Windows and the target was to get to a platform where it would be easy to integrate, that was familiar and easy to use."

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THE SOLUTION

Aiken moved from its legacy on-premise accountancy package to Microsoft Dynamics NAV in the cloud, which allowed the firm to enjoy the benefits of cutting-edge software without the overheads of managing it. The company was able to turn the software into an operational rather than capital cost. "With standard on-premise software you pay for the number of users and there is no easy way of changing that, whereas with the cloud you can scale up and down on a monthly basis," explained Gerry Power, Management Consultant at Sysco.

The model served Aiken well for the next few years but when Sysco developed the capability to run Dynamics NAV on Azure, Microsoft's dedicated platform-as-a-service, Aiken was a natural candidate for taking the software-as-a-service delivery model to the next level and became the first firm in Ireland to access NAV from Azure. "The big advantage of the latest version of NAV is that it is an end-to-end Microsoft solution," said Power.

Adrian Ryan was impressed at the speed of the move carried out by Sysco. The old system was shut down on a Thursday with the new one up and running the following Monday. "It was a 'copy and paste' migration that went very smoothly. If we had any issues, Microsoft came straight back to us," he said.

The migration also gave Aiken's three licensed users the latest version of the ERP product, Dynamics NAV 2013 R2. Features include more powerful application functionality like Cash Flow Forecast, Cost Accounting and Timeline Visualisation. Improved query and charting capabilities facilitate better data analysis.

BENEFITS

Having identified the cloud as an IT delivery solution that would meet the business needs of Aiken Promotions, Adrian Ryan was able to realise all his expectations with Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2013 R2, hosted on Microsoft Azure. Not only did it provide the business with an end-to-end ERP product that encompassed everything from accounts to reports, it gave the business the agility it needed.

Scalable solution

"The ability to 'flex' up and down to meet changing seasonal demand was very important to us," said Ryan.

"You have to embrace the new technology and move on. Microsoft Dynamics NAV made sense and it has delivered exactly what we needed."

Adrian Ryan, Financial Controller, Aiken Promotions

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Access anywhere

Armed with his laptop and logging into Dynamics NAV from venues across Ireland, Ryan can instantly settle payments with touring accountants. Any device including tablets and smartphones can be used to open the browser based software, giving Aiken all the flexibility of the cloud without the complexity associated with accessing on-premise applications.

Better visibility

Rich functionality in Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2013 R2 has given Ryan better reporting capabilities and visibility of the business. He can monitor budgeted and actual operating costs on an event-by-event basis and spot budget variances as soon as they occur. The query and search capability has particularly impressed him. "Enter key words, like Trial Balance, and a quick search of the entire package will give you everything you need. It's a great feature," he said.

Integrated applications

Going forward, Adrian Ryan plans to leverage more from Dynamics NAV by integrating it with other in-house applications including payroll. With 650 part-time staff on their books and up to 100 subcontractors employed during the busy summer months, it will give Aiken Promotions more visibility over short term employment contracts, ticking an important regulatory box.

Along with the product benefits of Dynamics NAV, Aiken Promotions has successfully leveraged the cloud, turning the capital costs associated with IT investment into operational expenditure. For a firm with no internal IT resources, it relieves the company of the burden of managing and maintaining on-premise infrastructure and applications. By outsourcing to Microsoft and Azure, the service is entrusted to a one-stop provider, all managed through a single point of contact.

Aiken Promotions is very satisfied with the software-as-a-service model. "You have to embrace the new technology and move on. Microsoft Dynamics NAV made sense and it has delivered exactly what we needed," he said.

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