



Microsoft Dynamics Customer Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Utilities—electric power

Customer Profile

Based in Houston, Texas, Horizon Wind Energy operates wind farms producing more than 1,300 megawatts (MW) annually and is currently developing a portfolio of more than 10,500 MW in over 15 states.

Business Situation

With assets and revenues growing rapidly, Horizon Wind Energy needed more powerful financial management software to handle the increased accounting workload and give managers business insight.

Solution

Horizon Wind Energy implemented Microsoft Dynamics® SL and extended the solution with the help of Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner SIS, enhancing the company's unique business processes.

Benefits

- Adapts to changing business needs
- Empowers decision makers
- Tightens financial processes
- Simplifies financial management

Leader in Wind Energy Supports Exponential Growth with Flexible Business Software

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Jayshree Desai, Chief Financial Officer, Horizon Wind Energy

Horizon Wind Energy builds wind farms that provide a sustainable source of energy across the United States. Having experienced phenomenal growth over a short period, the company switched from limited accounting software to Microsoft Dynamics® SL. The flexible business management software helped automate processes, improve project tracking, and more efficiently manage a growing accounting workload. Working with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner SIS, Horizon Wind Energy continues to enhance and extend Microsoft Dynamics SL with the Business Portal module for project managers and executives, and additional modules that support the company's unique processes. As the company grows, Horizon Wind Energy increasingly relies on Microsoft Dynamics SL to empower decision makers, simplify financial management, and adapt to changing business needs.



Horizon Wind Energy develops more than 10,500 megawatts of wind energy, enough to power 2.5 million homes in the United States.



Situation

Based in Houston, Texas, Horizon Wind Energy is a fast-growing wind energy firm that develops and owns wind farms across the United States. Horizon Wind Energy is owned by EDP Renováveis, a leading renewable energy company that designs, develops, manages, and operates power plants that generate electricity using renewable energy sources, mainly wind energy.

Horizon Wind Energy owns over 1,300 megawatts (MW) of operating wind farms and is developing a portfolio of more than 10,500 MW in over 15 states, enough to provide energy to 2.5 million homes in the United States. This rapid growth strained the company's previous accounting software.

"Because our previous accounting software could not accommodate multiple company records, we had to piece together a single vendor master file and chart of accounts in a spreadsheet. Reconciling errors was also a tedious process that required us to inspect various spreadsheets and different accounts," says Rhonda Jarrett, Assistant Controller at Horizon Wind Energy. "At one

point, we had to issue two checks because the total amount we needed to pay exceeded the available character field."

Besides contributing to accounting difficulties, the application did not provide the comprehensive, real-time data that management needed to make informed business decisions. For example, Horizon Wind Energy often spent millions of dollars developing potential wind farms, but lacked the tools to easily track expenses against budget for these projects.

"Because our financial processes required so much hands-on work, we didn't have the right information when we needed it," explains Jayshree Desai, Chief Financial Officer at Horizon Wind Energy. "In addition, we could not easily identify mistakes, so there was always an uncertainty about whether the numbers were correct."

Solution

Phenomenal growth at Horizon Wind Energy prompted company leaders to find a more powerful and scalable financial accounting system. By the time Horizon Wind Energy

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implemented Microsoft Dynamics® SL, the company’s assets quadrupled—from U.S.\$1.1 billion in November 2005 to U.S.\$4.3 billion in November 2006.

Before choosing Microsoft Dynamics SL, Horizon Wind Energy considered several enterprise resource planning systems, including Sage MAS 500. The company selected Microsoft Dynamics SL over MAS 500 and other competing software because of its flexibility, sophisticated project-tracking capabilities, and its ability to handle multiple company accounts.

“We were especially concerned about being able to set up processes in the way we wanted. The great thing about Microsoft Dynamics SL is that it does not force you to operate within the constraints of a rigid software environment; it adapts to your changing business needs,” says Kevin Rosenberg, Controller at Horizon Wind Energy.

For help modifying and extending Microsoft Dynamics SL, Horizon Wind Energy teamed with SIS, a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner that specializes in solutions for professional services businesses. “We work with clients who see their business processes as part of their competitive advantage. Microsoft Dynamics SL is more than an accounting system; it’s a flexible business management solution that supports and enhances our clients’ processes,” says Mark Kershteyn, Partner with SIS.

Consolidating Financials

The finance department uses Microsoft Dynamics SL to keep up with a growing workload. Currently, Horizon Wind Energy has 11 wind farm projects in operation, with over 100 projects in development. The consolidation package in Microsoft Dynamics SL enables accounting staff to keep separate accounts for each project, and then produce

consolidated reports with the push of a button. In addition, business managers have access to a single master vendor list and an up-to-date chart of accounts that provides them with the information they need to make confident decisions.

Drilling Down into Details

Because employees can generate financial reports in Microsoft Dynamics SL and not in external spreadsheets, accountants and business managers can more easily reconcile discrepancies and investigate trends. “The reports we generate in Microsoft Dynamics SL reflect our current business and give us information that we need to affect the future. With the more limited software we used previously, data was often too old to be relevant, and it was very difficult to find out the root causes for a certain result. In contrast, Microsoft Dynamics SL enables us to easily drill down to the document image, if needed,” says Jarrett.

Eliminating Manual Processes

Horizon Wind Energy continues to discover ways that Microsoft Dynamics SL can improve business. For example, the company recently deployed Purchasing and Contract modules in Microsoft Dynamics SL to eliminate manual data entry. SIS helped Horizon Wind Energy customize the purchasing forms to reflect the logistic details that contractors need when they make equipment deliveries to remote locations. Not only will this eliminate the need for paper forms and sign-off approval, but it will also automatically accrue purchases in the appropriate accounts.

Project Budgeting and Tracking

Horizon Wind Energy project managers now have access to detailed, up-to-date reports that help them track actual expenses against project budgets so that they can correct problems early in the process. With easy access to up-to-date costs, the finance

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department can also more accurately forecast future cash flow.

Currently, project managers in the field access the system through terminal services, but Horizon Wind Energy is working with SIS to deploy the Business Portal module that will provide a personalized interface and the ability to generate custom reports. In the first quarter of 2009, Horizon Wind Energy also plans to deploy Microsoft Office Project Connector for Microsoft Dynamics SL to eliminate redundant data entry and speed the flow of information from the field to the corporate office.

Benefits

As the company continues to experience rapid growth, Horizon Wind Energy relies on Microsoft Dynamics SL to optimize processes, manage operations, and efficiently handle financial accounting. "I recently met a potential investor who had knowledge of our company both before and after implementing Microsoft Dynamics SL," recalls Desai. "He complimented us on how much we had improved our back-office operations, and was amazed at how far we had come. Microsoft Dynamics SL certainly deserves credit for helping us get to this point, and we haven't yet tapped its full potential."

Adapts to Changing Business Needs

With help from SIS, Horizon Wind Energy can extend and enhance Microsoft Dynamics SL as its needs grow. Company revenues have increased by 185 percent from 2006 to 2007 and are expected to grow another 300 percent in 2008. Meanwhile, Horizon Wind Energy's employee headcount has exceeded 200 people as the company continues to expand across the United States.

"We're growing extremely fast—so quickly that we often can't anticipate what our needs will be going forward. Thankfully, whenever we ask SIS about a new function or change,

they're able to meet our requests by using out-of-the-box functionality in Microsoft Dynamics SL or developing a custom solution," says Jarrett. "Whether it's document imaging or an e-banking capability, SIS has been able to implement new functions quickly and inexpensively. It has given us tremendous confidence that the underlying Microsoft technology will support the needs of our business for the foreseeable future."

Empowers Decision Makers

Microsoft Dynamics SL gives project managers and executives at Horizon Wind Energy insight into the early trends and operational details that determine bottom-line results. "Microsoft Dynamics SL gave control back to management, as opposed to when we were using other applications. We rely on Microsoft Dynamics SL to help us forecast, budget, and optimize our business," says Desai. "By tracking performance relative to budget in real-time, we can identify areas where we need to focus our resources. Microsoft Dynamics SL helps us improve operations in every area of our business."

Tightens Financial Processes

As company revenues continue to grow, the finance department at Horizon Wind Energy appreciates the accountability provided by Microsoft Dynamics SL. Unlike the prior system, Microsoft Dynamics SL documents changes to facilitate auditing. "Our prior accounting package works fine for small operations, but companies that are looking to grow will eventually need to transition to a more robust solution. In our case, we will use the Microsoft Dynamics SL to improve our internal controls," says Rosenberg.

Simplifies Financial Management

Microsoft Dynamics SL has automated many manual processes, increasing efficiency and eliminating chances for human error. For example, when creating end-of-month

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For more information about Horizon Wind Energy products and services, call (713) 265-0350 or visit the Web site at: www.horizonwind.com

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reports, the Horizon Wind Energy finance department no longer needs to paste together spreadsheets and dig through different accounts to reconcile errors. This automation has reduced the end-of-month closing process by 66 percent.

Microsoft Dynamics SL also promotes productivity in the finance department by helping employees avoid tedious, wasted effort. Since Horizon Wind Energy began looking for a business management software package, the number of projects has increased seven-fold, yet the accounting staff has only recently begun to grow. "We're still incredibly busy, but we're accomplishing much more than we did previously with the same size staff. Microsoft Dynamics SL makes our jobs much more enjoyable," says Jarrett.

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

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