DSI Underground embarks on digital transformation with DXC Eclipse

Client name: DSI Underground (DSI)

Location: Australia

Industry: Manufacturing

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Challenge

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- To automate processes where possible, getting information into the business faster, and responding instantly to changing conditions and market demand

- To get more value from a business intelligence system that could provide real-time visibility into operations

Solution

- Move from Zap to Power BI

- Upgrade from Dynamics NAV 2015 to NAV 2018 to take advantage of mobile functionality

Results

- The immediate availability of accurate, real-time data will make forecasting more accurate including anticipating spikes in demand

- Increased visibility will also help the business improve its procurement processes as well as its sales processes.

DSI Underground (DSI) is Australia's largest manufacturer and supplier of specialist strata reinforcement and ground support products to the coal and metalliferous underground mining, and tunnelling sectors.

DSI operates in a highly-regulated marketplace with a complex manufacturing and fulfilment process.

DSI has long relied on Microsoft Dynamics NAV as its go-to business system. Dynamics NAV managed all of DSI's finance, procurement, sales, manufacturing, HR, payroll, and more. As a key business system, Dynamics NAV has been critical in DSI's growth over the past decade.

One of the key projects recently implemented in Dynamics NAV was to move the business's fixed assets from a basic spreadsheet into Dynamics NAV so that depreciation could be managed more accurately and easily.

Another recent project was the automation of DSI's manufacturing resource planning (MRP) system. Peter Vernon, ERP analyst, DSI Underground, said, "DSI's manufacturing runs off a MRP system that considers demand for sales orders. It can manage situations where we need a product to be delivered in Perth, but it's manufactured in Newcastle; the system tells the business how many of the product to make and raises a transfer order to get the product shipped to Perth in time for when the customer needs it. This used to take the planning manager three hours of work every weekend. Now, with Dynamics NAV, we've automated that process to run as part of the job queue, saving time."

That experience reinforced to DSI the value of automating processes where possible, getting information into the business faster, and responding instantly to changing conditions and market demand. This became the driving force behind a digital transformation project leveraging Microsoft products and services.

DSI wanted to get more value from a business intelligence system that could provide real-time visibility into operations. As part of the digital transformation journey, DSI planned to move to Microsoft Power BI to deliver the real-time insights required to make the business more nimble.

Peter Vernon said, "DSI's current BI solution provided information that was up to date as of the close of the previous day. But we want to get to a point where, as products are rolling off the presses, they're being entered directly into Dynamics NAV as available inventory. This would help the business manage daily quotas and targets far more effectively and without the manual, paper-based processes that are currently in place."

DSI also wants to move its systems from on-premise to the cloud in the future. The business has already adopted Office 365 and has moved its Dynamics 365 implementation to the cloud and can see clear benefits from a cloud-based approach.

Peter Vernon said, "We need to take small steps to move towards the cloud because of the business's heavy reliance on Dynamics NAV. The system is extensively customised to meet the business's needs. That makes it a challenge to upgrade to new versions of the solution and take advantage of new layers of functionality."

Solution

DSI knows that technology is the most important factor in getting operational efficiency out of manufacturing. Automation and intelligence are crucial goals for DSI in its digital transformation. The business had worked with DXC Eclipse for many years, so it turned to the team again to help build a roadmap for transformation.

Peter Vernon said, "DSI is at the very start of the digital transformation journey and we've already taken some big steps. The two key short-term goals are to move from Zap to Power BI and to upgrade from Dynamics NAV 2015 to NAV 2018 to take advantage of mobile functionality.

"Currently, if a manager is at an airport for example, they can't approve a purchase requisition that might be required for key stock. When we upgrade to Dynamics NAV 2018, the manager will be able to view the requisition on a tablet, then sign it off, keeping things moving at the factory.

"Furthermore, upgrading and integrating systems will let sales staff work more efficiently because they can update customer records, check on orders, provide quotes etc. from a single, easy to use system. We are at the start of that journey now."

In terms of the cloud, DSI has a hybrid approach as it works towards moving all systems and workloads into the cloud. Currently some systems are in the cloud while others are on-premise.

Peter Vernon said, "For example, we use Microsoft Dynamics 365 for CRM in the cloud, but it's not integrated yet with Dynamics NAV. So, our next project will be to integrate Dynamics NAV and CRM and host both on Microsoft Azure. While that's not quite a full-blown cloud solution, it is an important step on the way to cloud."

DSI has already transitioned to Office 365 which means staff members no longer have to go through Citrix to access their email if they're out of the office.

Projected outcome and benefits

By upgrading and integrating key business systems, DSI anticipates achieving key operational benefits that will help the business move faster in the right direction.

For example, Power BI will improve real-time reporting, letting managers make better decisions sooner. Furthermore, people will be able to create their own customised reports in Power BI.

Peter Vernon said, "People in this organisation are very good at using Excel and building spreadsheets to work with the data they get. With a reporting solution like Power BI, where they can drill straight into accurate, real-time information, their creativity and ability to add value to the business will be unleashed. The business is likely to see significant benefits when people can apply strategic thinking to the information they have, rather than spending time getting the information into a format they can use."

"Opportunities for improvement and expansion are always available, if you can utilise the capabilities of your systems well, or expand on those capabilities. That's where DXC Eclipse comes in. As an organisation, we don't know what we don't know. DXC Eclipse has the experience of working with lots of different businesses, so they can advise us on the best way to move forward."

Peter Vernon
ERP analyst
DSI Underground

DSI anticipates that its digital transformation will help the business compete more effectively in a highly-competitive marketplace. The immediate availability of accurate, real-time data will make forecasting more accurate including anticipating spikes in demand. This may also show that the amount of 'safety stock' DSI produces isn't necessary, which could save time and money.

Increased visibility will also help the business improve its procurement processes as well as its sales processes. For example, using SharePoint, DSI already offers customers a portal they can use for auditing purposes. It lets them self-serve to obtain safety and product audits for their sites. In the future, DSI would like to expand this capability to let customers place orders online and obtain information on current orders.

Peter Vernon said, "The opportunities for improvement and expansion are practically limitless. That's where DXC Eclipse comes in. As an organisation, we don't know what we don't know. DXC Eclipse has the experience of working with lots of different businesses, so they can advise us on the best way to move forward."

Working with DXC Eclipse

Trust is essential for DSI in its working relationships with partners.

Peter Vernon said, "We try to be proactive and work out where we need to improve to stay competitive, and we expect the same approach from our partners. We're relying on the team at DXC Eclipse to help us set our direction. If we express an interest in moving in a certain direction, the DXC Eclipse team offers advice and, if necessary, steers us in a different direction to make sure we can achieve our goals in a future-proofed way.

"DSI will be looking to DXC Eclipse for guidance around using PowerApps, which sit on top of the core solution and doesn't affect its code at all, rather than making customisations. This will reduce the complexity of upgrades in the future.

"Choosing to work with Microsoft for our products and DXC Eclipse as our partner gives DSI peace of mind that we're moving in the right direction for our transformation. There's a strong upgrade path with Microsoft products and we're excited about the possibilities offered by new products such as Microsoft Dynamics Business Central. With the backing of such a strong developer and partner community around the world, working with Microsoft is a no-brainer.

"Similarly, DXC Eclipse is an outstanding partner. Having worked with them for seven years, we've always been happy with how the team supports DSI and sorts out any issues promptly."

About DXC Technology

DXC Technology (NYSE: DXC) is the world's leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, helping clients harness the power of innovation to thrive on change. Created by the merger of CSC and the Enterprise Services business of Hewlett Packard Enterprise, DXC Technology serves nearly 6,000 private and public sector clients across 70 countries. The company's technology independence, global talent and extensive partner network combine to deliver powerful next-generation IT services and solutions. DXC Technology is recognised among the best corporate citizens globally. For more information, visit www.dxc.technology.