

Schneider Electric sparks user acceptance with merged, upgraded Microsoft Dynamics SL system

Client name: Schneider Electric

Location: Rueil-Malmaison, France

Industry: Energy

Challenge

- Drive cost savings and synergy between two acquired divisions
- Avoid security and liability issues from unsupported software
- Accommodate different go-live dates

Solution

- Upgrade, customise and merge the two Microsoft Dynamics solutions
- Combine user licensing and support staff, yet limit user visibility between the divisions
- Scale new Web Apps capabilities for mobility, including timecard entry from the field

Results

- One integrated, up-to-date and fully supported system
- Cost savings, efficiencies and flexibility
- High user acceptance with virtually no business disruption

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Schneider Electric is leading the digital transformation of energy management and automation in homes, buildings, data centres, infrastructure and industries. With a global presence in over 100 countries, Schneider is a leader in automation systems and power management — medium voltage, low voltage and secure power. Schneider provides integrated efficiency solutions, combining energy, automation and software.

The company, founded nearly 180 years ago, continues its innovation and growth both organically and through acquisition.

Innovation and growth

To run the business, Schneider uses a variety of different enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, including SAP, Oracle and Baan, across its residential, business, and partner divisions and departments.

Two of its acquired business units, Schneider Electric Buildings America (SEBA) and Mission Critical Systems (MCS), had been separately using Microsoft Dynamics SL effectively for nearly a decade each. The two divisions are similar in that they both deal in project management and construction.

“SEBA and MCS had become reliant on SL and the customisations that were made for their businesses, and SL remained a good fit for them,” says Amanda Moore, Schneider’s IT director, Services and Solutions for North America. “However, they were both using a version of SL no longer supported by Microsoft, creating a security and liability issue in case of a data breach or system crash.”

The team at Schneider knew it was time to upgrade the solutions from version 2011 to 2015, and combine the licensing and support costs for savings and synergy.

SEBA and MCS were using two different Microsoft Dynamics SL partners to support their separate systems, and for SEBA, that partner was DXC Eclipse, a practice within DXC Technology. Schneider asked both partners to submit an initial bid to develop a business requirements document for the project.

“DXC Eclipse won the initial bid over the other partner to help us develop a business requirements document because they had a better understanding of our business needs and stronger business analysts,” says Moore. “If this had been a straightforward upgrade, we would have built the business requirements internally, but we needed DXC Eclipse’s expertise to merge and upgrade the two different divisions.”

After DXC Eclipse developed the business requirements document, Schneider sent it out to several partners for a bid, and DXC Eclipse came in with the best solution at the best price. “Overall, we were more comfortable with the team at DXC Eclipse,” says Moore. “The sales and pre-sales team at DXC Eclipse did a good job demonstrating that they understood the project and our needs.”

A consolidated platform

“DXC Eclipse functions as an extension of our team, which is what we were looking for ... a true partner on every level, from executive management to the individuals on the project team.”

Amanda Moore

IT Director, Services and Solutions for North America, Schneider Electric

The solution at Schneider sits on a consolidated, single, upgraded Microsoft Dynamics SL 2015 platform for both the SEBA and MCS instances. The system is hosted in Schneider’s data centre in the mid-western United States, and financial data is exported to Oracle Hyperion Financial Management for global financial consolidation and reporting.



“The shared licensing model from Microsoft is now less expensive, and it has simplified support for us,” says Moore. “Now it’s one, integrated system, with one group of licences. We were able to combine our support staff, and take advantage of an upgraded system. We are fully under Microsoft support again.”

Go-live was originally planned for both SEBA and MCS around the same time frame, but SEBA ended up going live a few months ahead of MCS because of complex customisations. The two divisions operate very differently, so Schneider realised that they needed to re-architect the statement of work and system design. DXC Eclipse discovered a way within the product to have users log into their respective divisions and see only the information that applies to them, greatly cutting down on change management. SEBA users see only SEBA-related information, and MCS users only see MCS-related information.

“There is no indication to the end user that it’s a merged system, but we still benefit financially and on the back end,” says Moore. “Even though the MCS go-live was delayed, at the end of the day, we ended up with a much more elegant solution than what was first proposed.”

“We would like to see more robust reporting capabilities within Web Apps, so project managers can access reporting on their mobile devices without having to log into SL,” says Moore. “We met with Microsoft about this enhancement, and we feel as if they received our feedback positively.”

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Amanda Moore

IT Director, Services and
Solutions for North America,
Schneider Electric

A strong partnership

The teams at Schneider and DXC Eclipse worked well together from the start.

“We are happy with DXC Eclipse as a partner,” says Moore. “They have good people who know the systems, and they have a good rapport with my team. They never waste our time like other partners have, and they put the right team in place from the start. They stepped up to the plate, and hung in there with us when we had to change the scope of the project. At the end of the day, we have a better solution than what we originally intended, so it’s all very positive.

“DXC Eclipse also helped us out with Microsoft in getting us special permission to delay our license agreements for MCS while SEBA was live. DXC Eclipse functions as an extension of our team, which is what we were looking for ... a true partner on every level, from executive management to the individuals on the project team.”

The customised experience and minimal data changes meant a smooth transition with high user acceptance.

“The users can’t tell that it’s a merged system, so it’s the best of both worlds,” says Moore. “Without the merger, this would have been a straight upgrade. The creative part was figuring out how to do all the hard work in the background, so the user sees no difference. The combined Schneider and DXC Eclipse teams accomplished this together, and that has been a big benefit to all teams.”

About DXC Technology

DXC Technology [DXC: NYSE] is the world’s leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, serving nearly 6,000 private and public-sector clients from a diverse array of industries across 70 countries. The company’s technology independence, global talent and extensive partner network deliver transformative digital offerings and solutions that help clients harness the power of innovation to thrive on change. DXC Technology is recognised among the best corporate citizens globally. For more information, visit www.dxc.technology.