NAV or AX?

ERP

Which is the right Microsoft Dynamics ERP system for your organisation?

An Executive Comparison White Paper

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eBECS

Experts in Microsoft Dynamics

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Introduction

To any mid-sized business contemplating a move to a different ERP system, it's a familiar quandary. The logic behind taking a close look at a Microsoft ERP system is clear enough: Microsoft, after all, is a significant player not just in ERP, but in an extensive set of enterprise software offerings stretching across CRM, Business Intelligence and desktop productivity applications.

But *which* Microsoft ERP system? Microsoft Dynamics NAV, or Microsoft Dynamics AX? Here, life gets trickier. Both are widely used, and both have broad appeal to most mid-sized businesses.

And a truth that isn't heard often enough is this: for most businesses in the £10–£100 million revenue range, *either* of these Microsoft ERP systems would probably be a decent fit.

Put another way, there's no cookie-cutter kind of answer to the 'NAV or AX' question. Both are frequently sensible choices, and it's usually necessary to drill down to the fine detail to determine which of them is truly the *best* fit for a given business.

Which, frankly, can be a problem. Because many sources of advice have a vested interest in pushing one system over the other. They sell and support Microsoft Dynamics NAV. Or they sell and support Microsoft Dynamics AX. But remarkably few Microsoft ERP implementation specialists genuinely sell and support both, and possess genuine expertise in both.

At eBECS, their Microsoft ERP experts are different. They do genuinely sell, support and advise on both. So to help you answer the question posed by the title of this white paper, I spent time with them exploring some key factors to consider when deciding between NAV and AX.

There's no cookie-cutter kind of answer to the 'NAV or AX' question.

It's best to seek advice from someone who genuinely understands, sells and supports both systems.

Key factors to consider when deciding between NAV and AX

on deciding(duplicate**Company Structure**

NAV	AX
Microsoft Dynamics NAV offers multi-company, multilingual, and inter-company transaction capabilities, together with localisations.	Just like NAV, Microsoft Dynamics AX offers multi company, multilingual, inter company and localisation features. However, it also permits a single database to contain multiple companies and multiple localisations.

The takeout here is clear-cut: Microsoft Dynamics NAV is a good fit for de-centralised global operations, while Microsoft Dynamics AX has the edge when it comes to handling more centralised global operations.

Manufacturing Mode

NAV	AX
Microsoft Dynamics NAV offers a rich set of manufacturing capabilities. In terms of traceability, NAV provides serial number and lot number tracking.	Microsoft Dynamics AX similarly offers rich manufacturing capabilities, but AX contains additional functionality that gives it the edge in process manufacturing environments. Traceability is another differentiator: AX adds pallet number and so-called 'licence plate' tracking functionality to serial number and lot number tracking.

For some Manufacturing companies, the additional manufacturing and traceability features of AX will be 'must-haves'. Other manufacturers, once they have sat down with an implementer such as eBECS and compared their requirements with what NAV has to offer, will find they are amply catered for by NAV's extensive manufacturing feature set.

Key factors to consider when deciding between NAV and AX

Deployment Choice	
NAV	**AX**
Microsoft Dynamics NAV can be deployed on-premise and in the Cloud on Microsoft Azure, for instance, or on the eBECS Private Cloud. Indeed, eBECS offers its Cloud-based DaaS (Dynamics as a Service) for NAV.	Everything mentioned for NAV is essentially true for AX, including the choice of DaaS (Dynamics as a Service) from eBECS. It's worth noting, however, that while Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is identically offered on-premise and in the Cloud, its successor will initially only be offered via the Cloud. A functionally equivalent on-premise version will follow later, although the timing is as yet uncertain.

In general, there isn't a great deal of difference between Microsoft Dynamics AX and Microsoft Dynamics NAV in terms of deployment options. Subtle small deployment differences may be significant to individual businesses, but these are best explored with one of eBECS' Dynamics ERP experts.

Licensing Costs	
NAV	**AX**
Microsoft Dynamics NAV offers *Full User* and *Light User* licensing. But aside from a difference in terminology, for a typical mid-sized business, licence costs across NAV and AX are broadly comparable.	Microsoft Dynamics AX uses the descriptors *Enterprise, Functional* and *Task-based* for its licences, but licence costs are much the same as for NAV.

Configuration and Deployment Services Costs	
NAV	**AX**
Microsoft Dynamics NAV typically has a 1:2 licence-to-service cost ratio: every £1k of licence will typically require £2k of associated configuration and deployment services. However, eBECS' use of template-based 'best practice' deployment can reduce this cost, and also the time required to deploy.	With Microsoft Dynamics AX, the comparable licence-to-service cost ratio is typically 1:4. As with NAV, a template-based 'best practice' deployment approach can reduce costs and timescales.

How best then to sum up the choice between NAV and AX?

With each solution providing a reasonable fit for most businesses, it's necessary to probe into the fine detail in order to determine which is the best fit for you.

In short, it depends on a business's individual requirements and circumstances: there are no simple, 'one size fits all' answers.

The most valuable piece of advice is this: talking to people who know both solutions very well indeed — and who can provide objective advice on both solutions — is vital. And at eBECS, you'll find those people.

'One size fits all' — from another perspective

Having said that there are no simple, 'one size fits all' answers to the question of NAV or AX, let me contradict myself somewhat. The most positive aspects of the term 'one size fits all' can and do come into the equation.

As mentioned in the preceding comparison tables, eBECS has developed a highly efficient template-based 'best practice' approach to the deployment of both NAV and AX systems. This is based on eBECS' experience of 200-plus Microsoft ERP deployments and its deep experience in sectors such as Manufacturing, Distribution, Retail, Not-for-Profit and all aspects of the Service industries.

An eBECS implementation is largely built by optimising the very best of standard NAV and AX functionality, tailored to the needs of the client organisation's business and industry — and without the need for time-consuming, costly and complex custom code.

So it's worth exploring eBECS' template approach and industry-specific solutions in some detail when comparing NAV and AX.

Bringing it all together

Microsoft Dynamics goes beyond traditional ERP systems by bringing the applications that run your finances, sales and operations together with the familiar Office apps you and your people already know.

Anywhere, anytime

Combined with the power of the Cloud, a Microsoft business solution frees you to work anywhere, anytime, across your devices.

Seamless, secure

No matter how you access and use your systems, you receive the same seamless experience and enterprise-grade security to protect your business and its customers.

Gets you started quickly and grows with you

Microsoft Dynamics ERP is designed to get you up and running quickly and to grow with your business. You can start with what you need today and easily adapt as your needs change. Organisations will find reassurance in Microsoft's clear, long-term road map.

Fits into your business like no other ERP system

Of course, Microsoft Dynamics ERP, be it NAV or AX, also fits right in with the Microsoft technologies that make your business tick, from Office to Outlook to SharePoint and beyond. That typically translates into reduced complexity and cost, and greater user productivity and satisfaction too.

Indeed, Dynamics NAV 2016 now includes Microsoft Suite Collaboration – a huge investment made by Microsoft into 'native' integration across the Microsoft Suite of Solutions (NAV, CRM Online, SharePoint, BI and Azure).

Also, Power BI brings a new BI Content Dashboard for Dynamics NAV (compatible with 2013R2, 2015 and 2016), allowing businesses to share information for user consumption in Excel, SharePoint, Web and across mobile devices.

eBECS is a specialist in total Microsoft Business Solutions, designing and delivering Lean and agile solutions globally for customers in Manufacturing, Distribution, Retail, Services, Not-for-Profit and other sectors.

Tailored to industry and business needs, eBECS' award-winning solutions cover Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Mobile, Field Service, Data Analytics, Business Intelligence (BI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and Cloud and Managed Services. eBECS' solutions draw on the full Microsoft Business stack, including Microsoft Dynamics AX and NAV, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, Microsoft FieldOne, SharePoint, Office 365, Microsoft BI and Power BI, PowerApps and Microsoft Azure.

Each solution is focused on delivering improved business performance and productivity, and is measured by comprehensive BI. This is achieved by enabling our customers to streamline and integrate processes, improve customer relations and service, maximise sales, minimise waste, optimise the extended supply chain and manage customer demands efficiently.

Just as importantly, eBECS' 'templated' implementation and unique rapid-return methodologies deliver significant time and cost benefits to its customers.

Want to find out more?

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