



# eBECS and AxPact: working with the best of the best

Businesses looking to implement or support Dynamics AX overseas now have an alternative proposition to consider, finds IT Contributing Editor **Malcolm Wheatley**

Not so long ago, being a multinational manufacturer bracketed a business alongside giants such as Unilever, GlaxoSmithKline and Diageo. No longer: these days, even relatively small British manufacturers can have overseas facilities – sales offices, in some cases, but increasingly factories and sourcing operations as well.

Which poses a problem should those businesses want to extend their ERP systems to those same overseas facilities. As, of course, they're very likely to want to do.

There are relatively few truly global implementation partners to assist with rollout in such a scenario – especially so in the case of implementation partners with affordable fee structures that are oriented towards businesses

at the small and medium-sized end of the scale spectrum.

Throw in a requirement for specific industry expertise, foreign language skills, and a familiarity with overseas tax and financial regulations, and the problem of finding an implementation partner for overseas facilities becomes trickier still.

## Global alliance

Which is why businesses running Microsoft's Dynamics AX ERP system should take note of a recent announcement from eBECS, a UK-based Microsoft implementation partner with deep manufacturing, distribution and service industry expertise, and with strong specialisms in Dynamics CRM, Business Intelligence, and a range of other Microsoft technologies and products.

In a development that is likely to be warmly welcomed by eBECS' client base, the firm has announced that it has accepted an invitation to join AxPact, described as "the world's largest Microsoft Dynamics AX delivery team". AxPact brings access to 1,250 certified Microsoft Dynamics AX specialists, who have collectively implemented over 1,100 Dynamics AX projects since 1999.

In short, AxPact brings together an alliance of 30 of the most highly proven and respected Microsoft Dynamics AX partners in the world, providing expertise, delivery and support capabilities in over 80 different countries.

And it's an alliance with exacting standards, says Michael Blatherwick, AxPact's founder and chairman. Joining it not only involves meeting those standards and maintaining them, he stresses. Members must also be a 'top 3' implementation specialist in their respective countries, and have strong references from Microsoft.

"AxPact members work as extensions to each other's implementation and support

businesses," he explains. "And being an AxPact member places an obligation on a firm to assist any other AxPact member – be it with pre-sales advice, implementation assistance, or ongoing support." For both implementation and support providers, and their customers, work carried out by another AxPact member – any member, anywhere – carries an assurance of work carried out to the highest professional standards.

"There's an assurance of consistent service standards internally, and an assurance that an application will be implemented using a consistent methodology," explains Blatherwick.

"What's more, work carried out by an AxPact member also carries an assurance that the application will be configured consistently in all locations, and that ongoing maintenance and support will be delivered consistently across all those locations."

In short, he sums up, for the end customer the whole experience is rather like dealing with a single global partner – a partner who happens to have skilled, proven and fully-certified Dynamics AX specialists in all the countries where they are likely to want to do business.

"There really isn't a difference," he sums up. "The client places an order with one AxPact member, and the other members act as third-party subcontractors."

## Joined-up global service

Back at eBECS, sales director Sam Dharmasiri concedes that eBECS sees AxPact membership as a huge feather in its cap. As an organisation which has been responsible for around 10% of all Dynamics AX projects worldwide, he explains, AxPact has an excellent relationship with Microsoft.

At AxPact's recent annual conference in Lisbon, for instance – to which the organisation's rules state that the most senior management of each implementation partner member must attend – two



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## Case Study: Neoss

A manufacturer of dental implants, Harrogate-headquartered Neoss has sales and distribution subsidiaries in eight countries, including Austria, Germany, Denmark, Italy, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden.

But having outgrown its existing business systems, Neoss saw the need for an integrated ERP solution that would not only fit the Neoss business model today, but also provide scalability to accommodate the company's ambitious growth plans in the years ahead.

A recommendation from Insite, Neoss' existing hosting provider, an organisation very familiar with Neoss' needs, led to Microsoft Dynamics AX and eBECS.

"We were adamant that our lead UK partner must have established partnerships in each of the subsidiary countries, in order to handle local fiscal requirements, both for the implementation itself, as well as for providing 'helpdesk' support afterwards," says Ruth Keeling, operations manager at Neoss.

"eBECS was successfully able to meet this requirement, thanks to its United States office, and the ability to call on foreign partners with whom it had successfully delivered projects in the past."

AxPact membership allows eBECS to build on this strong network of relationships, providing ready-made links with experienced Dynamics AX implementation partners in many more countries, states eBECS sales director Sam Dharmasiri.

"As Neoss grows and expands, our global implementation and support footprint is with them every step of the way," he says.

senior Microsoft Dynamics executives were in attendance, providing insights into Microsoft's current thinking, the technology roadmap, and upcoming developments.

"Prior to joining AxPact, we at eBECS had to look for overseas partners and evaluate them each time a client wanted to implement outside the UK," he notes. "Now we know that we have access to a group of partners who meet known quality criteria. It gives us the ability to offer a joined-up global service, staffed by local experts with their feet on the ground in the cultures in question, who all have a similar mindset to that which we have at eBECS."

Which isn't necessarily the case when dealing with larger implementation partners, warns AxPact's Blatherwick: "Not only do these firms close down country-specific offices if they're not profitable, but the offices in question can be troublingly small – a handful of generalists, rather than specialists in a particular industry, or type of implementation."

In short, says eBECS' Dharmasiri, a global rollout with eBECS and AxPact offers a genuinely different alternative to going with a single global partner.

"With AxPact, we're working with the best of the best," he says. "And the benefit flows straight to the end customer." **END**