



Linkwood Solutions

Dedicated Microsoft Dynamics NAV Professional Services Partner



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Linkwood Solutions enable a joined-up Microsoft Dynamics NAV Solution for The Ambassador Theatre Group



ATG require a scalable ERP system

Linkwood Solutions chosen as the IT Partner

Resources and expertise provided

Plans for the future

- Current Dynamics NAV user
- Standardisation of documents and processes between venues and head office

- Proven expertise and ability to deliver on time
- Trusted support of long term vision for Dynamics NAV

- Development of buildings maintenance system and payroll solution
- Centrally controlled
- Clear processes

- Alignment of disparate systems
- Development of PO and invoicing systems
- The use of Business Intelligence for reporting

Challenge

Ambassador Theatre Group is a constantly evolving organisation, acquiring venues regularly to support its rapid growth plans and extend its status as the UK's largest theatre group. Whilst they already moved away from their Sage based accounts system to Navision back in 2003, they needed to be sure that their existing system would be capable of being sufficiently scalable, drive standardisation of processes and operations both within the Group's head offices and across its venues, old and new.

Vin Govender, Group Head of Technology for Ambassadors said, "We were confident that our Navision system, (now Microsoft Dynamics NAV) would be able to support us as we acquired more theatres. Our main concern was that our Navision Partner at the time, whilst capable of supporting our existing systems adequately, lacked the in-depth skills to deliver potentially complex, integration projects, support our long term vision and assist us with advancing our Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution."

Solution

Ambassador Theatre Group selected Linkwood Solutions in 2008 to assist with managing the strategic direction of their Microsoft Dynamics NAV system, in preparation for their ambitious growth plans.

Vin Govender said, "We already had experience of working with Nic Lamb, Managing Director of Linkwood Solutions as we worked with our Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution for many years. We needed to be sure that we could develop a trusted relationship with our Navision Partner, with a long track record of working successfully with Microsoft Dynamics NAV, capable of looking at the big picture in terms of helping up align our IT strategy with our business ambition. Having met the team at Linkwood Solutions, they ticked all the boxes."

The system now supports 60 concurrent users, with up to 100 employees capable of accessing the system. The Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution extends to all aspects of the organisation, from finance to operations. All



About The Ambassador Theatre Group

Co-founded by Howard Panter and Rosemary Squire in 1992, the Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) has a total of 42 venues across the UK. ATG's impressive portfolio of theatres includes historic buildings in the West End such as the Apollo Victoria, Phoenix, Piccadilly and Playhouse as well as many famous regional theatres such as the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, the Theatre Royal, Brighton and the Edinburgh Playhouse.

ATG is one of the country's foremost theatre producers and has been behind some of the most successful and innovative productions in Britain and internationally. Recent ATG co-productions in London and internationally include The Misanthrope starring Damian Lewis and Keira Knightley; the successful and critically acclaimed award-winning musical West Side Story, at Sadler's Wells and on tour in the UK; Andrew Lloyd Webber's Sunset Boulevard and Guys and Dolls starring Ewan McGregor.

<http://www.ambassadortickets.com>



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of the venues use it for HR and payroll and the system integrates with their ticketing and till systems to automate invoicing processes.

In addition to the financial system, ATG also use the Dynamics NAV solution for 2 other key systems: Building Maintenance and HR/Payroll.

Building Maintenance

For an organisation whose major assets are its venues, building maintenance is a significant part of its operations. Linkwood Solutions developed their building maintenance systems within Microsoft Dynamics NAV to enable each venue to keep on top of repairs, so that the buildings and operations team can keep track of spend against budget. The system deals with all aspects of building maintenance from ordering through to tracking of jobs and they now benefit from complete visibility as all information goes back to one system.

Describing the key benefits of the building maintenance system, Vin Govender said, "Everything is now centrally controlled with clear processes for venue and head office sign off. This is due to the fact that the system was configured within Microsoft Dynamics NAV."

HR/Payroll

"Our payroll system is constantly evolving. Linkwood Solutions have worked with us to configure the system to cater for the individual nature of our business in a unionised sector, working to discrete terms and conditions. Specifically, the payroll system ensures that the time sheet entry is validated by the sophisticated rules of the union. Up to 5000 employees are paid at any given time and they may be casual, part time or permanent staff. Each has their own rules, particularly where holiday pay is concerned. Every year the union will negotiate changes to the rules so to say that our system needs to be flexible, is an understatement!" added Vin Govender.

In addition to developing the payroll solution, Linkwood Solutions delivered a training programme to the payroll staff as previously the payroll was managed by a bureau service. ATG now has one group wide payroll system and has standardised payroll processing across the group to ensure that the rules do not get interpreted differently by different venues. It is currently being used by all 42 sites.

Acquisition

In November 2009, ATG successfully acquired Live Nation's UK Theatres, the most significant development in ATG's 17 year history. The cost of the acquisition was £90 million and the deal created a combined business valued of some £150 million. Live Nation is a US based company and runs Oracle as their group-wide business management system. This presented ATG with a significant challenge to bring across both financial and employee data from the Oracle system into Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

Vin Govender said, "The team at Linkwood Solutions was instrumental in successfully project managing the process of merging the financial history from Oracle into Microsoft Dynamics NAV. We had to liaise with the US team to get hold of the data from the Oracle systems and this presented challenges in dealing with the geographic and time difference issues. Linkwood Solutions hit all targets and deadlines."

Benefits

Vin Govender said, "Since working with Linkwood Solutions, our Microsoft Dynamics NAV system has evolved as our organisation continues to growth. The building maintenance and payroll systems projects have enabled us to more effectively control our operations centrally. Furthermore, transferring from a payroll bureau to doing everything in house has reduced our costs significantly. Linkwood Solutions approach to training our staff to use the systems was very cost effective. Not only did they run "train the trainer" type courses so that we could do a lot of the training ourselves internally, the training was structured so that our processes were aligned with best practice."

He added, "Most importantly for ATG, we needed to change our financial year to co-inside with the new tax year from April 1st. Thanks to Linkwood Solutions project management excellence, they ensured that our new payroll system went live successfully to coincide with this."

ATG will continue to see additional benefits from the system, particularly now that reporting is all managed through one single system.

"Linkwood Solutions essentially have enabled us to manage the growth of our business effectively. We look forward to developing our successful partnership with Linkwood Solutions,"

Vin Govender, Group Head of Technology for the Ambassador Theatre Group

Future

Commenting on future planned projects, Vin Govender said, "We are currently working with Linkwood to merge the operations further, and will be looking at key processes in even more detail to ensure that we adopt best practice from both companies - for example where their practices were different due to the Sarbannes-Oxley Act."

ATG currently use two separate ticketing systems and they will be working with Linkwood Solutions to determine the business benefits of aligning these systems more effectively. They are also planning to roll out a more sophisticated purchase ordering and invoicing system to give better visibility of committed costs throughout the group and are looking to introduce an accident reporting health and safety module. Furthermore, with one single system in place, ATG will review their management information systems and assess the value of Business Intelligence (BI) that extends beyond their existing reporting capabilities.

"Linkwood Solutions essentially have enabled us to manage the growth of our business effectively. We look forward to developing our successful partnership with Linkwood Solutions," concluded Vin Govender.