Edwin Watts Golf Chooses Microsoft Dynamics for Omni-Channel Retail

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Lynda Barr, Chief Financial Officer, Edwin Watts Golf Shops

Over the past four years, Edwin Watts Golf Shops (EWGS) has grown its retail business to more than 90 retail locations in addition to direct mail and Internet sales. The company has also grown in complexity, offering custom equipment, trade-ins, and specialized customer service that taxed the capabilities of its aging legacy systems.

The company’s AS/400 hardware was approaching obsolescence, and the lack of integration between its inventory management, general ledger, and PC-based point-of-sale systems contributed to numerous inefficiencies. Employees were required to enter orders and product information multiple times, and analysts and executives couldn’t easily monitor business performance without manually consolidating data from multiple sources.

Further, because they lacked visibility across channels and among stores, EWGS couldn’t share inventory in a way that would effectively leverage its scale and create a seamless experience for shoppers who no longer recognize the distinctions among these outlets. Lynda Barr, EWGS Chief Financial Officer, recognized that centralizing purchasing and managing inventory more effectively would drive significant cost benefits. In fact, her analysis showed that the company could recover enough working capital to easily justify the cost of deploying a modern and fully integrated retail management system.

Reviewing Their Options

EWGS’s search for a new retail solution started with the RIS Software Leader Board, a ranking of technology vendors published by Retail Info Systems News. They reviewed the top-performing retail applications to identify those that could deliver inventory/warehouse management, point of sale, and general ledger in a single system, and eliminated vendors that couldn’t support the company’s multichannel model. The initial screenings quickly narrowed the field to three candidates—Epicor, JDA, and Microsoft Dynamics for Retail—which were evaluated at a detailed level by a team of functional leads representing EWGS executives, IT, and various business departments.

After viewing presentations and demonstrations of each system, and reviewing each against a 215-point functional specification, the team decided unanimously in favor of Microsoft Dynamics for Retail, which was...
deployed by Ignify, a Microsoft Dynamics Gold Certified partner and 2012 Microsoft Dynamics Partner of the Year.

**Strength of the Platform**

Concerned about the end-of-life of their AS/400 systems, EWGS executives favored Microsoft SQL Server as a back end for their new system. “We viewed SQL Server as a much better platform to invest in,” says Barr. “It’s less expensive, easier to purchase, easier to maintain, and offers much easier disaster recovery. Plus, the vertical integration between Microsoft Dynamics for Retail on Microsoft SQL Server gave us additional confidence in the platform as a whole.”

**Support for Omni-Channel Retail**

Of the three contenders, Microsoft Dynamics for Retail came closest to truly servicing EWGS’s multichannel business—and to providing a seamless customer experience across those channels. “Many vendors offer strong point-of-sale solutions, but Microsoft Dynamics for Retail also delivers on the phone sales and Internet sales channels,” notes Barr. “Delivering excellent customer service requires that we provide a consistent experience regardless of channel, and that we’re able to track and share customer preferences and purchasing history among stores, Internet, and direct mail sales.”

**Ability to Tailor the Solution**

EWGS’s review team also placed a high premium on the ability to configure their systems and processes to the exact needs of the business. “EWGS is truly a specialty retailer,” says Barr. “Our products are very complex. We fill a very high percentage of custom orders, we offer trade-in credit for old equipment, and we have very specific customer service requirements. We need the flexibility and ease of customization offered by Microsoft Dynamics for Retail.”

Barr and her team were also impressed by the availability of a wide range of third-party add-ons that provide specific custom functionality within Microsoft Dynamics for Retail. The initial deployment includes Certified for Microsoft Dynamics solutions that assist with bank reconciliations, tax calculation, and Wi-Fi mobile inventory management. “Because of the Microsoft Dynamics partner model, there were multiple companies that we could choose from for that custom functionality. And implementing these applications was super-fast because they’re built and certified for Microsoft Dynamics for Retail,” says Barr.

She also notes that of the three vendors on their short list, only Microsoft Dynamics for Retail gave EWGS the flexibility to select the partner that would deploy the system. “From an IT perspective we viewed that choice as a positive differentiator,” she says. “We did some research into the largest Microsoft Dynamics for Retail partners, and we liked what we saw in Ignify. The fact that Ignify did the implementations for the Microsoft retail stores was also a strong recommendation.”

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Lynda Barr, Chief Financial Officer, Edwin Watts Golf

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics for Retail, go to:

For more information about Ignify, go to:
www.ignify.com

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