



SKS finds Microsoft Dynamics NAV is the key to fast and accurate order fulfilment

Having outgrown its legacy system, SKS reviewed available options for new enterprise software. Evaluating Microsoft Dynamics NAV, SKS was impressed by its role-based functionality, which provides a dynamic and personalised user-interface with intuitive navigation. The solution's evolution system made it easy to customise functionality and to meet the need for business process integration. Microsoft Dynamics NAV proved well suited to SKS's distribution and wholesale operations and its intelligent data handling increased the speed and accuracy of order fulfilment.

Old system too costly to maintain

"Our IT system is fundamental to sales, stock, purchasing, payroll - almost everything we do in fact," says Richard Hawkins, SKS sales manager. "We rely on the system very heavily and soon know if it's not working properly."

SKS had been running its legacy system for over a decade and found that it had simply outgrown the system. Pushing its limitations meant that users were encountering problems such as lack of reports, file locking and data size. "The product wasn't being developed sufficiently to keep pace with our needs," explains Hawkins, "and we were having to call developers in to handle any new business-specific requirements, which is costly."

SKS took the decision to start from scratch, and consulted with Profile Enterprise Solutions, which had maintained its Opera system for several years. "We looked at staying with Pegasus but it just didn't work with our database," recalls Hawkins. "Profile was involved with how we wanted to progress and recommended Microsoft Dynamics NAV as an ideal solution."

Role Tailored Client is a real winner

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is a complete enterprise resource planning software solution for medium-sized organizations. SKS had previously seen the system but was not clear on the specific benefits to its business. "Profile introduced us to the new 2009 version with the Role Tailored Client (RTC) user interface, and arranged a demo using our own data to illustrate exactly how it could help us," says Hawkins. "That got us interested, and we followed up with some demo installations at our offices so that we could play around with it. We had a list of requirements which we were able to confirm, and gave it the green light around Christmas 2009."

The role-based graphical user interface - the Role Center - is a key feature of Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009, providing users with a personalised screen with role-specific information and an overview of tasks and activities. There are 21 ready-made Role Centers which can be combined to make up each user profile. Users can access Outlook, Excel, and Word from the same screen, making it easy to find, use, and share information.



About SKS

SKS is the UK's leading key blank and key cutting machine supplier. The firm offers over 8,000 product lines from stock, including a wide range of locks and other security products, and is the UK's largest supplier of locksmith tools. Based in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire SKS was established over 30 years ago and has developed a base of more than 5,000 customers across the UK in retail, wholesale and the security trade.

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Easy to add bespoke functionality

Profile worked closely with SKS to develop some additional requirements, and was also able to link in Opera II, which SKS had retained for payroll purposes.

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is designed with an open development environment and feature-rich application areas, making it easy to customise.

“We deal with key blanks for example, and there are many different manufacturers with different part numbers for the same items,” explains Hawkins. “We needed the system configured to take any part number, cross-reference and locate the correct item, handle the conversion and print customer references on the orders.”

Microsoft Dynamics NAV has the functionality for stock management, so that orders can be directly exported to the warehouse carousels for picking. Hawkins says: “In fact the system automates numerous processes and generates all our paperwork, reducing data entry and the potential for mistakes. Greater accuracy and speed of order fulfillment are beneficial for us and for our customers.”

Automated reordering and discount processes

“Microsoft Dynamics NAV is consistently reliable” says Hawkins, “and its flexibility supports continuing development. We’re planning to introduce a reordering system which will manage stock requirements based on sales figures, time of year, suppliers, pricing and so on, using a formula to work out when is the best time to buy.”

Elements of the sale and discount structure also increased flexibility, enabling users to be very customer-specific on quantities, prices and discounts, which were previously calculated manually. Users would have to pay close attention when copying data over but now this is done automatically, which Hawkins sees as a big improvement. “The system generally does things you don’t have to think about anymore, so you can move on to something better.”

Familiar Microsoft interface boosts usability

Hawkins says that usability has been a major benefit. “Being a Microsoft system, layout, menus and buttons are all familiar, so users found it easy to pick up and were able to get on with tasks quickly. In day-to-day usage there’s quite a lot we can do hands on – move files, add fields or create new tables and pages. Profile has shown us how straightforward customization can be, so we can make changes ourselves without always having to call for a development quote.”

Depending on role requirements, RTC enables users to customise their screen to see only the information they need or use the most. “Whether it’s a customer or a stock item, you can bring it to the front screen,” explains Hawkins. “Microsoft Dynamics NAV provides multiple ways of navigating so you can get to the information you need easily without having to come out of your work.

“There are links behind the data so you can click it like a button, and whether it’s money or quantity you can see a breakdown of how it was calculated and where the information was sourced from. Pretty much every screen has got that.”

No limits

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is working well for SKS and they have a few additional developments in mind. “In terms of functionality we have very few limitations,” says Hawkins. “We are looking at connecting with our website to provide live data on stock and prices, and barcoding to scan product information directly onto the system.”

Data capabilities within Microsoft Dynamics NAV offer significant potential for management information, believes Hawkins. However, with high levels of user interaction, he also acknowledges that security management is an important feature. “From an access and permissions perspective, the system gives us a lot of flexibility and control regarding who can see certain data and what they can do with it.”

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is a comprehensive solution but also highly customisable, so as well as being suited to a breadth of different business sectors and applications, it can be tailored to meet the specific needs of individual organisations and users. “A number of other major players and suppliers in our industry are using the same system, so it’s certainly well proven in wholesale and distribution. And our experience shows that it can be very well matched to specific company needs.”