

Facts in Brief

Company Profile:

The Motor Trade Association (Inc) New Zealand is an association of New Zealand's motor industry professionals. Established in 1917, the MTA now has over 4,000 members representing every facet of the industry – from repair workshops and service stations to specialists in alternative fuels and outdoor power equipment. MTA people are dedicated technicians, sales and service staff whose main priority is to ensure vehicle safety on New Zealand roads. It provides a number of services, including information relating to the motor industry, training, lobbying and gift voucher sales. The MTA also wholly owns VTNZ Ltd and recently announced its merger with MVDI.

The Challenge:

The MTA needed to consolidate financial and customer data into one manageable system that would help it vastly improve service levels to its customers and streamline business processes.

The Solution:

Microsoft Business Solutions-Axapta®

Functional Areas:

CRM, Finance I, Finance II, Banking, Trade, Logistics, Sales Force Automation, Telemarketing, OLAP

Benefits:

Axapta is a versatile business solution that is helping the MTA strengthen customer relationships while offering members more flexibility in the way they receive the association's services. It is also streamlining the MTA's financial and distribution processes. Some tasks that used to take days are now completed within hours.

Platform:

Microsoft Windows 2000 Server

Workstations:

40 Concurrent Users

Microsoft Business Solutions Partner:

Solution Partners Limited, Auckland, New Zealand

Axapta is the Vehicle that Improves Service to 9,000 Customers at the MTA

The Motor Trade Association (MTA) is the leading association of New Zealand's motor industry professionals, servicing more than 4,000 members and 5,000 non-members across the country. With a diverse range of customers representing every facet of the industry, the MTA made it imperative that they communicate to each member on a personal level. To achieve this goal, the organisation adopted Microsoft Business Solutions-Axapta®, supported by Solution Partners Limited, in December 2002. This versatile business solution is helping the MTA strengthen customer relationships while offering members more flexibility in the way they receive the association's services. It is also streamlining the MTA's financial and distribution processes. Some tasks that used to take days are now completed within hours.

Customers are the MTA's Most Important Asset

Justin Joseph, Chief Financial Controller at the Motor Trade Association, explains that it was extremely difficult for the MTA to personalise customer relationships with the company's previous ten year old financial system.

"Our members are our most important asset and it is vital that we provide them with the highest quality service," says Mr Joseph.

“Under our legacy system, customer information was decentralised, which meant we could not track our members’ needs effectively or personalise member communication easily. The information was difficult to merge and we often had no choice but to send members a generic piece of communication, such as our newsletters.”

Finding the Right Solution and Technology Partner

Early in 2001, the MTA began searching for an integrated business application that would deliver the CRM functionality it needed to better understand its members’ needs and address them accordingly.

Mr Joseph says that more than 17 vendors tendered for the project, before the company short-listed three applicants and made the final decision to adopt Microsoft Business Solutions-Axapta supported by Solution Partners.

“Once we agreed on our core requirements, the selection process was rigorous and spanned three months. Our senior management team evaluated all the products against set criteria and decided that Axapta was the easiest and most flexible solution available. It offered us a fully integrated business solution that could cater simply for our financial, distribution, and most importantly, customer relationship management needs.

“As the underlying Axapta architecture is layered, we could also easily customise the solution and upgrade to future versions without having to worry about losing any of the modifications.”

Mr Joseph adds that the product and vendor go hand in glove and Solution Partners were an equally important factor in the association’s decision to use Axapta.

“We placed a strong emphasis on the vendor and their ability to support the product. Solution Partners proved to be a highly skilled and supportive partner that was genuinely interested in helping our business. They did not make any false promises and were committed to ensuring that Axapta delivered on our expectations.”

Axapta went live in December, 2002, after a three month implementation. 40 staff members’ use the new system, which is hosted at the organisation’s headquarters in Wellington and can be accessed remotely through Microsoft Windows 2000 Server.

Axapta is Helping Improve Customer Service and Communication

Mr Joseph says that first and foremost, Axapta is helping the MTA significantly improve its customer service levels and communication with members.



The association can now send customised announcements and other items of interest to individual members.

“With Axapta, we can identify the services our members utilise and why. More importantly, we can use this information to become more proactive in alerting members to the services we think may be most valuable to them,” explains Mr Joseph.

“We can also offer members more flexibility in the way they receive our services. For example, customers can choose to receive any of our communications and newsletters by fax, email or post.”

He adds: “Axapta enables our member-based committees to play an important role in determining membership requirements through the ability to co-ordinate and monitor these processes more efficiently.”

Debbie Altham, Managing Director at Solution Partners Limited, says that the integrated Axapta CRM functionality provides the MTA with one source of reference for all its customer information.

“Financial and non-financial data is stored in one place, delivering a complete view of all customer relationships to the MTA.”

The Solution is Easily Customised to Suit Unique Business Requirements

Solution Partners also customised Axapta to streamline the MTA’s gift voucher redemption.

“The development tools built within Axapta allowed us to deliver a comprehensive bespoke module that is fully integrated and has exactly the same look and feel as the rest of the Axapta system,” adds Ms Altham.

Justin Joseph of the MTA says: “The MTA is the largest vendor of gift vouchers in New Zealand, available through its member businesses. The new redemption system allows us to easily track voucher serial numbers and reimburse customers in an efficient and effective manner.”

Axapta Delivers Breadth of Financial Functionality

In addition to delivering strong CRM capability, Mr Joseph says that Axapta provides the MTA with broad financial functionality. The association has been able to automate a number of financial processes, requiring less time from staff to create reports and statements.

“Our financials have certainly become much more efficient,” says Mr Joseph.

“For example, we can produce cash flow statements automatically within the system. This used to be a very laborious exercise that would involve up to three people.”

The invoicing and debtor management process is also more efficient with Axapta.

“We offer a number of services to our members and can issue anywhere between 200 to 250 invoices per day.

“With our previous system, supplier invoices were created manually and we never knew the status on an invoice until it had been approved.

“Axapta allows us to generate invoices automatically and track the progress from the moment they are entered into the system. The system also generates reminder letters to debtors - the credit controller simply decides when to push the button. This is creating huge time savings as we used to have to prepare the letters manually which took us up to two days,” explains Mr Joseph.

The workbook within the Axapta Sales Force Administration module is also helping MTA staff manage debtors more efficiently.

“Everything you need to do on the day pops up automatically on the screen once you open the workbook. For example, it reminds us which debtors we need to chase up on where as previously, we had to check each individual account to see what was outstanding.”

Finally, Mr Joseph says that financial reporting is now more versatile.

“We can create pre-defined reports and custom reports, which are much more accurate and valuable in helping the MTA make better business decisions.”

More Accountability within Distribution

The depth of data made available via Axapta is also increasing the accountability within the MTA's distribution processes, from dispatch through to delivery.

“We had similar distribution functionality prior to Axapta but it was more complex and one small mistake could cause serious headaches. Axapta provides us with more information which helps us easily locate any mistakes. Every field within the system can be tracked so that we can quickly find and fix any problems and identify who was responsible for the changes,” explains Mr Joseph.

.NET Presents New Opportunities for the Future

Looking to the future, Mr Joseph says that the MTA is excited about moving its Axapta solution to the Microsoft .NET platform.

“Long term, we plan to offer our members Web-based services, including electronic ordering and the ability to access and edit their profiles and view account information online. It will be much easier to link Axapta with our Web site once we shift to .NET.”

Mr Joseph adds that in the meantime the MTA is working with Solution Partners to further refine the system and maximise their Axapta investment.



“We’ve identified about six areas within Axapta that we’d like to enhance to deliver even greater value to our business.

“We are confident that we will gain a return on investment in the long term - all the small savings here and there definitely add up. Axapta is future proof and has the capability to expand with the organisation in the years ahead.”

Mansur Zwart, Manager, Microsoft Business Solutions New Zealand, concludes that the MTA is just one of many customers that are already recognising the benefits that Microsoft .NET can deliver to their existing Microsoft Business Solutions investment.

“All Microsoft Business Solutions’ applications, including Axapta, will be shifted to a unified .NET platform within the next three years,” says Zwart. “This will enable our customers to take advantage of XML Web services in a more efficient manner and it will become more cost effective for them to automate the business interactions with their clients and suppliers.”

| About Microsoft Business Solutions in Australasia

Microsoft Business Solutions, a division of Microsoft, offers a wide range of integrated, end-to-end business applications and services designed to help small, midmarket and corporate businesses become more connected with customers, employees, partners and suppliers.

Microsoft Business Solutions’ applications optimise strategic business processes across financial management, analytics, human resources management, project management, customer relationship management, field service management, supply chain management, e-commerce, manufacturing and retail management. The applications are designed to provide insight to help customers achieve business success.

Globally, Microsoft Business Solutions has 3,800 team members, 4,500 Partners and more than 260,000 customers using their range of products in 132 countries. www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions

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