Making the most of Microsoft technology

We discuss how the Microsoft technology stack has helped AX for Pharma to develop an integrated enterprise resource planning solution for pharmaceutical manufacturers with the company's CEO Andrea Ruosi

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What is AX for Pharma?

AX for Pharma is a commercial off-the-shelf solution that provides pharmaceutical and life sciences companies with a complete integrated enterprise resource planning, laboratory information management system and manufacturing execution system. The only pharmaceutical solution certified for Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, AX for Pharma also leverages Microsoft SQL Server, SharePoint and Office to offer modules for quality management, plant maintenance, dispensing, regulatory compliance and activity-based costing.

How does AX for Pharma benefit pharmaceuticals and life sciences companies?

AX for Pharma helps pharmaceuticals to reduce costs, manage the growing complexity in regulatory compliance, simplify computer system validation and accelerate time to market. It also supports all of the functionalities a company needs to comply with Good Automated Manufacturing Practice, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and electronic documentation. For example, it can be used to create electronic signatures and approved vendor or manufacturer lists. This allows customers to implement best practices and accelerate the decision making processes.

Why is the Microsoft technology stack, particularly Dynamics AX, a good platform for AX for Pharma?

Dynamics AX 2012 offers core ERP functionalities that help pharmaceuticals manage finances, supply chains, sales and marketing, human resources and other critical operational processes more effectively. We've also extended these to help our customers meet GMP guidelines and country-specific industry regulations.

Using Dynamics AX also enables us to easily integrate AX for Pharma with Microsoft Office, allowing companies to access Word to create manufacturing batch records and test sheets, or leverage Outlook to send configurable e-mail notifications. Meanwhile, Excel can be used to import and export data to and from Dynamics AX, or to calculate results and analyse trends related to research and development projects. Microsoft Project can also be used to manage projects. SharePoint can also be integrated in many parts of the process, for example to document production operations or the consumption of certain formula items.

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How does being a Microsoft Gold Partner benefit both your company and your customers?
We're able to access training material and use Microsoft's standard methodologies – such as SureStep – to help with project planning and accelerating implementations. Marketing and selling our AX for Pharma solution is also much easier. Not only do we have a priority ranking for Dynamics AX in the online Microsoft Pinpoint directory, but we can also participate in marketing campaigns, free product demonstrations and conferences.

Meanwhile, our customers are reassured that AX for Pharma meets industry-specific and governmental regulations and that it's been developed by a certified independent software vendor. Customers also know it has been chosen and recommended by pharmaceutical companies worldwide as a low-risk, easily maintained solution that can be implemented quickly to transform pharmaceutical operations.

Tell us about the new AX for Pharma-based lifecycle services tool and why it has been built on Microsoft Azure.
Our AX for Pharma Solution Package offers customers an overview of the business process flows for procurement, manufacturing, sales, inventory and quality management. Designed to accelerate the implementation and validation processes for AX for Pharma, it demonstrates how to use specific AX for Pharma features. This ensures that companies know how to purchase and ship materials to and from approved

vendors, manufacturers and customers; that they execute advanced quality control processes; and that they are able to improve inventory tracking.

Using Azure enables us to manage cloud backups and disaster recovery, deploy a Dynamics AX 2012 R3 environment on Azure within hours, and reduce IT costs because we no longer need to manage an extensive IT infrastructure. Plus, our customers can easily scale it to meet their changing business needs.

Do you have plans to use Microsoft technology to expand AX for Pharma in the near future?
We will upgrade the AX for Pharma solution to the latest version of Dynamics AX, which will be released in early 2016 and will be built on the Azure cloud. This will be a game changer, not only because Microsoft plans to continually update the platform, but also because it will offer a simplified and intelligent user experience.

Soon, we'll introduce a new AX for Pharma Clinical Supplies module to enable users to manage how pharmaceutical products are manufactured for clinical trials. It will cover protocol management, randomised and blind testing, dosing scheduling, packaging and labelling, and distribution.

We'll also extend AX for Pharma's existing modules by adding new functionalities to improve how our customers manage storage condition and storage restriction, anti-tampering measures, safety information, weighing and dispensing processes for samples and subcontractor ingredients, cleaning operations, and compliance with GMP manufacturing codes. ◎