



Vera Bradley ERP deployment enables e-commerce growth during pandemic

Vera Bradley



About Sunrise

A Microsoft Gold Partner, Sunrise Technologies specializes in digital transformation, using ERP, CRM, and business intelligence solutions to enable global, unified commerce.

Microsoft products

Dynamics 365
Power Platform

Industry

Consumer Goods
Retail
Manufacturing

Organization size

Medium (238 employees)

Countries

U.S.
Western Europe
China

Microsoft partner since
2003

Customer Outcomes

22 system replacements,
11 system deployments,
130 integration points
in 13 months

50% YoY growth of digital
business

Cloud transformation delivers the agility to thrive in a changing world

Vera Bradley, an American luggage and handbag company with headquarters in Fort Wayne, Indiana, started as a wholesale business in 1982 but has grown to include over 140 retail stores as well as a thriving e-commerce business. This evolution of the company's omnichannel business model had a major bottleneck, however: disparate on-premises systems. To centralize data across functions and make their business more agile, Vera Bradley went in search of a cloud solution that could help them centralize supply chain management, finance, and commerce operations.

After a full evaluation, Vera Bradley selected Sunrise Technologies to implement Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance, Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management, and Dynamics 365 Commerce. Sunrise specializes in Dynamics 365 and Power Platform implementations for consumer goods, retail, and manufacturing companies. It had the end-to-end industry and technology expertise for ensuring the success of a project that involved 22 system replacements, 11 system deployments, and 130 integration points – including much needed industry IP for inventory allocation and retail replenishment processes.

Then, the global pandemic hit. Retail stores temporarily shuttered their doors during lockdowns, and most corporate employees began working remotely. The teams at Sunrise and Vera Bradley were able to quickly transition to remote deployment efforts, ultimately going live in August 2020 with ERP, Order Management, and POS at 140+ retail stores and e-commerce, completing the project in 13 months, as scheduled.

The new system has been central to Vera Bradley's ability to weather the impact of the pandemic. When e-commerce business skyrocketed due to lockdowns, Vera Bradley was able to adjust quickly. The company easily moved inventory between channels to address changes in demand. "Optimizing the supply chain is more critical than it has ever been. Implementing a consolidated view of inventory and a distributed order management tool that can deliver inventory to the appropriate channel and demand is critical for success in modern retail," said Daren Hull, President of Vera Bradley.

The shift to e-commerce business continues to be a growth area for Vera Bradley, which has expanded through the acquisition of lifestyle jewelry company Pura Vida. As Rob Wallstrom, CEO of Vera Bradley, called out in the Q3 2020 earnings call, "Even as our stores were reopened during the third quarter, our Vera Bradley digital business grew nearly 50% year-over-year and Pura Vida's e-commerce sales grew over 17% for the quarter, despite disruptions in the supply chain. E-commerce sales comprised over a third of total sales for the quarter."

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—Adam Fox
VP Information Technology
Vera Bradley

During the ERP project and pandemic, Vera Bradley decided to embrace Dynamics 365 for CRM for a more holistic view of the customer with Sales and Service, and the company chose Sunrise to implement the solution. “One of the goals of our transformation is to reduce the number of systems our Customer Service Team needs to access to serve omnichannel customers. Dynamics 365 is enabling us to remove legacy technical debt and allows us to focus on serving our customer efficiently,” said Adam Fox, VP Information Technology at Vera Bradley.

Delivering scalability and elasticity to customers

Sunrise has been a Microsoft partner since 2003 and has seen their business shift away from on-premises CRM and ERP. Using Dynamics 365 and Power Platform to help customers successfully make the cloud transition is one of their key value propositions for driving business impact.

“I think that this pandemic has been a real proof point of the cloud architecture. Can you imagine if you are in a traditional on-premises world, where you expect X amount of transactions from wholesale, X amount from e-commerce, and then all of a sudden that radically shifts? That would require extraordinarily painful capital acquisition of expensive hardware,” said John Pence, Founder and President of Sunrise Technologies. “Our customers on Dynamics 365 didn’t have to worry about that – when they saw their e-commerce business double or triple during the pandemic, all of the resource allocation just happened organically.”

The Microsoft cloud has also made it much easier for Sunrise to bring their own IP solutions to market, providing the industry-specific features and functionality their retail, consumer goods, and manufacturing clients need to be successful.

“When it comes to solving our client’s problems, the combination of Dynamics 365 and Power Platform is fantastic. This is how we build trust and relationships—with these incredible products. The innovation of the product line is phenomenal; the decision to re-architect it for the cloud was so correct.” said Pence.

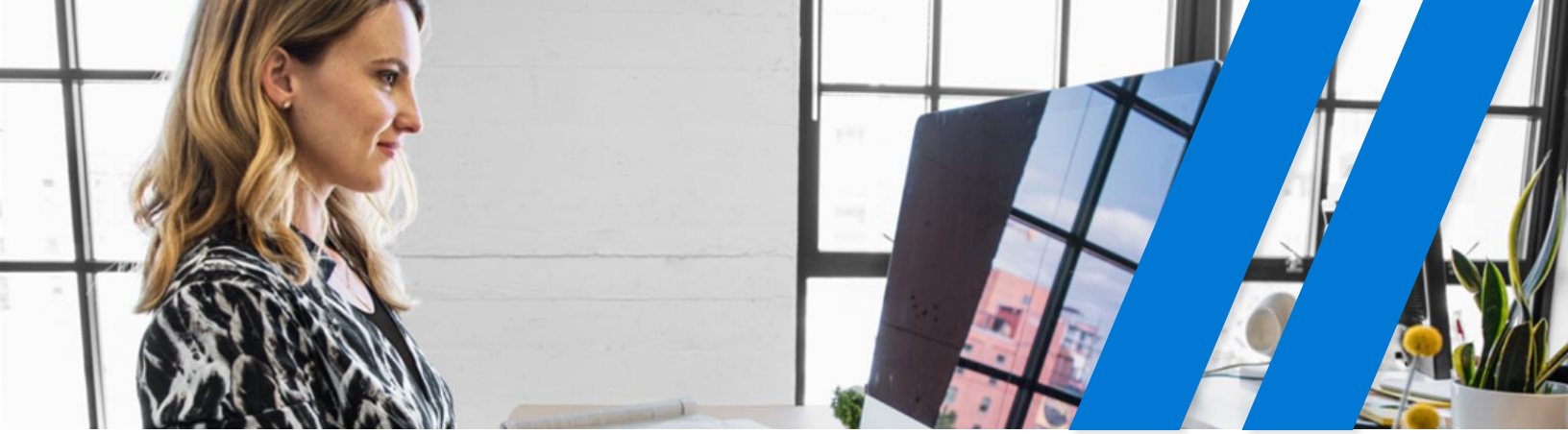
The Sunrise IP offerings all work in Dynamics 365 Finance and Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management consoles. They include features like advanced forecasts, advanced netting algorithms, which are critical for direct-to-consumer business forecast management, a robust set of advanced inventory allocation rules, and retail replenishment projections. With Power BI, Sunrise provides clients real-time visibility into forecast demand and can quantify the results of their process changes.



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Founder and President
Sunrise Technologies

Maintaining growth and customer focus

Sunrise's philosophy is to be an enduring, incredible partner for its clients, building relationships that last for decades. Therefore, for Sunrise, scaling its business means scaling very high-end consultants—the kind that can nurture partnerships with deep expertise in Dynamics 365. The company invests in ensuring that the consultants are always at the top of their profession through education, training, and professional development. "We take a very long-term approach to our business. When a customer needs us 10 years from now, we want to make sure we're there and still adding value to their business, regardless of where technology has moved in that time," said Pence.

This approach has led to consistent growth of 15-20% per year, growing from just 14 people to more than 230 spread across the United States, Europe, and China. "We didn't expect to grow over the past year with the pandemic hitting our retail customer base so hard, but we grew in single digits," said Pence.

In addition to their high levels of service excellence and technology expertise, Sunrise sees two additional factors that have helped them maintain their growth: the Microsoft field sellers and Microsoft ecosystem partner-to-partner connections. "There has been a profound change over the last couple years, with Microsoft broadening its salesforce for Dynamics 365. There are now 5,000 sellers out there we can engage with," said Pence.

Over their 27 years in business, and as a Microsoft partner since 2003, Sunrise has also built strong relationships with other ISVs and SIs. "We connect at all levels with partners in other verticals or geographies for best practices and lead sharing – our CEO, our chief administrative officer, our sellers, and our marketing team. The Dynamics partner camaraderie is really good. It's collaborative," said Susan Thompson, Senior Director of Marketing at Sunrise.

Taking a look into the future

For the future, Sunrise sees AI as the next step in the evolution of ERP and CRM. Because Dynamics 365 and Power Platform make it easier to embed AI into processes, Sunrise sees a big opportunity for innovation in their focus industries, such as making recommendations based on analyzing common actions within the systems.

But while new technologies will drive new types of services and IP, future success will also be staying the course with a clear focus on customer needs and positive results. "I think that Microsoft has the right solution for the market at the right moment in time right now. There is so much opportunity right there," said Pence. "We have a great solution surrounded by great tools, so I think from just organic growth of Microsoft Business Applications, we are in a really great position."