KICKSTART YOUR DYNAMICS 365 TRANSFORMATION

AX 2009 & 2012 EDITION

READY TO TRANSFORM?

When they were first introduced, Dynamics AX 2009 (AX09) and Dynamics AX 2012 (AX12) were significant steps forward in functionality and usability for ERP users. Improvements like multisite capabilities, better connectivity to other Microsoft products, and a refreshed product interface ensured that Dynamics AX had officially arrived as a serious competitor to other Tier 1 ERP systems.

While Dynamics AX, both the 2009 and 2012 versions, have continued to serve many companies admirably, its days as a supported system are long gone. Current AX users may find themselves worried about ransomware attacks, frustrated with a clunky and outdated UI, constrained by outdated functionality, and tired of ongoing infrastructure costs.

Dynamics 365 is a modern, cloud-based ERP solution, and it's time to consider making the switch. This eBook covers ten essential topics to consider as you plan your AX to D365 migration.

1. KNOW YOUR SUPPORT OPTIONS
2. USE THE RIGHT TOOLS
3. CONFIGURATIONS
4. REPORTING
5. CUSTOMIZATIONS
6. INTEGRATIONS
7. MIGRATIONS
8. PROJECT MANAGEMENT
9. SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS
10. WHAT ABOUT BUSINESS CENTRAL?

PARTNER UP

YOUR SUPPORT OPTIONS

All good things come to an end, and for Dynamics products, that's usually about ten years after they are first introduced. Regular support for Dynamics AX 2009 ended in 2018. Extended support options from Microsoft ended in 2021. While many partners offer their own AX support options (like, say…us), the reality is that the game has changed from one in which you just need to hold out for the next update, to one where holding onto an outdated AX environment can mean putting your business at risk…

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

The nice thing about upgrading from AX to Dynamics 365 is you don't have to start from scratch. For AX12, Microsoft has released data migration tools to help with upgrades. For your ISV solutions, check with the developer–they may also have migration tools.

It is worth noting that the tools provided by Microsoft and quite possibly your ISV partner are just starting points and most likely won't do everything you need. Factor in that extra time as you plan your upgrade and make sure you know exactly what will and will not be covered.

FAQ

Why is there no code migration tool for AX 09?

Between the release of AX 2009 and AX 2012, the decision was made to change the fundamental way the solution was written. You wouldn't be able to use a code migration tool from AX 2009 to AX 2012 either. Because Dynamics 365 is built from the same code base as AX 2012, the same challenges exist.

CONFIGURATIONS

When it was launched, Dynamics 365 was very similar to AX 2012 R3. However, the gap between Dynamics 365 and AX has grown wider with each new release. This is good news for you, because it means that much more functionality! It also means that the version of Dynamics 365 you start with won't be the same version when you go live, nor will it be the same one you'll be supporting six months later.

AX users can expect to see a huge improvement in functionality by moving to Dynamics 365. It also means when you start your move, you'll need to be prepared to let some customizations go and use the base code as much as possible...especially since in the cloud world, the fewer extensions, the better. This shouldn't be too painful, as many of the customizations AX users initially relied on are now standard functionality.

This improvement in standard functionality means you may also be able to eliminate a few ISV solutions as well. For those ISV partners you decide to keep, make sure you understand how they plan to operate in the new environment. Their solution needs to be available as a code extension. It also needs to keep up with the demanding pace of change. Dynamics 365 receives functional updates several times a year...ask your ISV about their solution's update cadence and how they plan to adjust.

FAQ

What if I need help letting go of my customizations?

We get it: letting go of a process that has served you just fine for a while is tough. But a good implementer doesn't simply copy and paste what you're currently doing. A systems upgrade should include a thorough review of your business processes: a huge part of the value comes from the opportunity to start over, refresh, assess what's working, and drop what isn't--and work with a partner who can offer best practices and insights for your industry.

REPORTING

Reporting is now deeply integrated into Dynamics 365, making it easier than ever to access and analyze data. With workspaces that feature embedded Power BI dashboards, users can get an instant read on key KPIs, transforming raw data into actionable insights. This seamless integration allows users to interact with data in real-time, create custom reports, and make data-driven decisions faster than ever before. Thanks to this robust feature set, many users find that Power BI is the only business intelligence tool they need!

Microsoft, along with its partners and ISV providers, offers a range of data packages designed to help you unlock the full potential of Dynamics 365. These pre-built data models and reports can save you time and effort, allowing you to surface critical information without starting from scratch. By leveraging these resources, you can quickly implement best practices and ensure your reporting is aligned with industry standards.

Power BI's deep integration with Dynamics 365 not only enhances the visual appeal of your ERP but also transforms the way you approach business intelligence. By making the most of the available data packages and utilizing Power BI's advanced features, you can turn data into your most valuable asset.

FAQ

What's the difference between Power BI and Power BI Pro?

The basic version of Power BI includes plenty of features for users to connect to various data sources, create reports, and visualize data. More capabilities are coming to Power BI all the time, like conversational language, prebuilt visualizations and templates, and drag-and-drop workspaces that put your most relevant KPIs a glance away. Power BI Pro contains all the features of the free version, but with more capabilities for collaboration, sharing, and greater data handling.

CUSTOMIZATIONS

While AX09 and AX12 users should expect to see a significant increase in functionality just from the migration to Dynamics 365 (seriously, you're getting a lot), there is still a good chance you will need some industry-specific customizations.

How customizations are handled is one of the areas in which Dynamics 365 most differs from old versions of AX. Dynamics 365 uses extensions rather than overlays to customize 'objects' within the solution. You can think of them acting more as a plugin, rather than something that sits on top of your base code.

Okay, we've talked about using the base system as much as possible, but we get it: every business is going to require at least a few customizations. The way Dynamics 365 handles customizations is to use extensions to modify functionality without touching the base code. It's one of the key differences between 365 and AX, and it's a change for the better because it makes it easier to swap solutions in and out, troubleshoot, and maintain...without messing with your core ERP system.

FAQ

Where can I find Dynamics 365 ISV extensions?

Check out Microsoft AppSource!

What happens to my extensions when there is a platform or application update?

TBD - use the Microsoft analysis report or a tool like our own RVAS service to assess your system. Even better, work with a support partner like Sunrise Global Support to help you stay proactive and spot potential conflicts before they become an issue.

INTEGRATIONS

We'll start with the bad news: all of your integrations will have to be redone. Now for the good news: you might have fewer integrations this time around, thanks to improved functionality in Dynamics 365.

Plan for a good chunk of time to rewire your integrations, as the framework has changed significantly. For example, AX 2009 relied on the Application Integration Framework (AIF) whereas Dynamics 365 uses data entities.

For those ISV solutions that you end up keeping, you're going to need to check whether they sit within Dynamics 365 as an extension or if they integrate in. If they sit within Dynamics 365 as an extension, then it is a matter of following up to see how the ISV plans to keep up with Microsoft's pace. If the solution integrates in, you may find that the ISV has built its own tool.

FAQ

What is the difference between AIF and data entities?

AIF is a document service similar to EDI. Data entities are a more standard OData protocol. This method exposes data and actions and allows Dynamics 365 to handle batch loads of data.

Can we integrate Dynamics 365 to on-premise solutions?

As long as you have an Internet connection, you shouldn't have a problem!

MIGRATIONS

When it comes to migrating from AX to Dynamics 365, this is a true migration, not a database upgrade. You will have to export your data, transform it to match new entities in Dynamics 365, and then import your data into Dynamics 365. However, it's important to understand that you'll be using the same data entities for migration as you did for your integrations, so leverage that framework.

As you plan your migration, you will need to consider what to do with your historical data. The migration tools allow you to migrate your master data, open transactions, and your balances, but not closed transactions.

While the migration is certainly worth it in terms of the increased functionality, data migration is always a fairly labor-intensive part of an ERP implementation, so plan to start as early as possible and migrate incrementally. Your implementation partner should also be able to present a solid plan for migrating your data as well.

FAQ

What happens to m\y historical data?

The available migration tools only focus on current data. Some customers choose to export their historical data to an external database, but others choose to keep their legacy systems running for a while.

Can I perform multiple migrations?

We recommend it! The table structures between AX09, AX12, and D365 are very different. Ideally everything will be mapped correctly, but in the off chance there is an error, multiple iterative migrations will let you catch any errors.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

If you were part of the team that originally implemented AX, you probably used a waterfall methodology. While waterfall may have made sense for on-premise deployments, Dynamics 365 is cloud-based, demanding agility and a faster approach to development.

In getting our own clients live on Dynamics 365, we've identified a few keys to success:

- ✦ Sprints are key. Embrace an iterative approach for analysis and design.

- ✦ Introduce end users to Dynamics 365 early in the project.

- ✦ Prioritize migrations and iteration over customization.

- ✦ Use improved, cloud-based tools to track tasks, goals, and progress.

FAQ

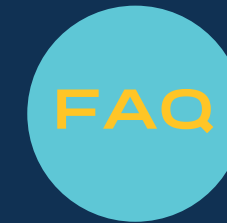**Why is it better to show users Dynamics 365 without customizations?**

Any new business system implementation would be a huge adjustment for your team, which is why we recommend giving them access to Dynamics 365 early and often. Without this acclimation period, users could get a perception of missing functionality, leading to calls for a customization you don't really need.

IS THE CLOUD SECURE?

If it seems like you hear about a new cyberattack nearly every week, you should be concerned for your on-premise system. Even though there are robust cybersecurity solutions out there (and simple common-sense practices you can encourage in your organization), your on-premise systems are vulnerable.

Cyberattacks, especially ransomware attacks, paralyze businesses all the time. All it takes is one click for And while at first glance it might *seem* safer to keep your data and business systems right where you can see them, moving to the cloud can open up a world of flexibility, security, and scalability.

Dynamics 365 benefits from Microsoft's extensive cloud security infrastructure. This includes advanced threat detection, encryption, and continuous monitoring. Microsoft invests heavily in cybersecurity, offering features such as multi-factor authentication, role-based access control, and automated updates to protect against emerging threats.

FAQ

How does Dynamics 365 improve security compared to Dynamics AX?

Hosted on Microsoft Azure, Dynamics 365 benefits from enterprise-grade security, including advanced threat protection with real-time detection and automated responses. Data is encrypted both at rest and in transit, with options for customer-controlled encryption keys. One of the significant advantages is the automatic and regular security updates provided by Microsoft, ensuring the latest protections are always in place without manual intervention.

WHAT ABOUT BUSINESS CENTRAL?

WWhen upgrading from Dynamics AX, you may be wondering about Business Central, Microsoft's ERP solution for the SMB market. Dynamics 365 is designed for larger enterprises with complex needs, offering advanced capabilities in financials, supply chain, and global operations. Business Central, on the other hand, is aimed at small to medium-sized businesses, providing a more streamlined ERP solution. Dynamics 365 offers extensive customization and integration options, while Business Central is more user-friendly with simpler customization. Cost is a key consideration, as Dynamics 365 is typically more expensive and requires more IT support, whereas Business Central is more budget-friendly and easier to manage. Future growth and the complexity of your operations should guide your choice: Dynamics 365 is ideal for larger, more complex businesses, while Business Central suits smaller, less complex operations.

PARTNER UP

First things first, you should carefully evaluate your relationship with your current partner (if you have one). How quick are they to respond to you? Do they seem to have a finger on the pulse of what's happening at Microsoft? Are you really happy with them, or are they just what's comfortable? Do you feel like they are going to make it for the long haul, or do they seem to be barely hanging on? If you were ever going to be brutally honest about the relationship with your partner, this is the time.

If after performing this evaluation you're still happy with your partner, great! You should still arrange to have a discussion with them to talk about your transition plan. However, if you're having second thoughts or you didn't have a great implementation experience the first time around, this is a good time to explore other options.

FAQ

What are some questions to ask when evaluating potential Dynamics 365 partners?

- How many AX to D365 upgrade projects have you completed?
- What are your long-term support options?
- How do you keep your solutions up to date and on track with Microsoft's Dynamics 365 release schedule?

GET EXCITED

Hopefully, you now feel more prepared to tackle your migration to Dynamics 365. It may feel daunting now, but it will be well worth it once you're able to take full advantage of everything the solution has to offer.

Just like AX 2012 was a game changer for its time, Dynamics 365 has the same potential – except this time there's no looming dread of what the next, better, thing will be. Or hoping that you'll retire before you ever have to go through an ERP implementation again. Instead, you get to look forward to years of feeling totally supported, no matter how the business may shift or grow. You can look forward to taking advantage of transformative business practices, enabled by the intelligent cloud. And you can look forward to knowing you'll never be on a "legacy system" ever again.