

## ABS ON MICROSOFT SHORTLIST

**ANGLIA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS** has been selected as a finalist in Microsoft Corporation's Partner of the Year Award in Microsoft Dynamics NAV.

Winners of the 2007 Microsoft Partner Program Awards, which recognise Microsoft partners that deliver market-leading, Microsoft-based solutions, will be announced on July 11 in Denver, Colorado at the Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference.

"Anglia Business Solutions has been working with the award-winning Dynamics NAV platform for the past 10 years" said Anglia's managing director, David Hurley, pictured. "Our strategy is to focus on the supply chain arena in the mid-range business sector.

"In 2005, we adopted a vertical focus targeted on the food supply chain industry, and the fresh produce sector in particular. We have set up a specialist ISV unit to create and develop a leading edge Dynamics NAV-based package, LINKFresh, which meets all the business needs of the global fresh produce industry. The reputation of the LINKFresh product has spread rapidly as clients have reported some very impressive improvements in productivity and profitability.

"Our objective is to leverage the reputation of the LINKFresh package to become the number one application for the fresh produce sector. Being chosen as a finalist for the Worldwide NAV Partner of the Year Award is a superb tribute to the dedication and skills of our people, as well as the customers who worked in partnership with us to achieve this global recognition."

Awards will be presented in a number of categories, with winners chosen from a pool of more than 1,800 entrants worldwide.

"We have a diverse and talented partner ecosystem that each year raises the bar in the design and deployment of customer solutions built on Microsoft technologies," said Allison L Watson, corporate vice-president, Microsoft Worldwide Partner Group. "We are pleased to recognise Anglia Business Solutions as one of our partners leading the field in this category." ○



## CLEAR THE IMPLEMENTATION HURDLE

In this month's column, Anglia Business Solutions moves onto the implementation stage, and advises a clear focus on people and processes, as well as technology

**IN LAST** month's article "does the technology matter?" the focus, for obvious reasons, was on the technology platform. However, once you have selected the right software for your business, you still have a way to go before benefiting from the investment.

The next challenge is the implementation process. This is where many an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project has foundered in the past.

Basically, there are three core elements that make up a centralised ERP system: the people, the processes and the technology. Getting any one of these wrong can hamper the success of the project. However, by far the most important aspect is how people are managed throughout the inevitable changes to the working environment caused by the deployment of a new all-embracing solution. Responsibility for this element rests firmly with the management team of the company implementing the system.

The first aspect in the deployment of a centralised integrated business management solution is to realise that it will affect all parts of the business. The system will impact on people planning and ordering the fresh produce, executing those orders through QC and the packing processes, transporting the goods to the customers, collecting the money and paying the growers. At each stage of the process, the company will be reliant on the personnel operating in those areas to accurately record what they have done. In many cases, the data will be posted directly into the system. Missing or incorrect data can have a significant impact throughout the business. Their co-operation is vital to the success of the project.

It therefore makes perfect business sense to manage this process through thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation. This involves consultation with, and the involvement of, the people affected by the changes. Consultation, however, does not just mean selling the change to people as a way of accelerating agreement and implementation. The changes brought about by the new system need to be understood and managed in a way that people can effectively cope with the implications for them. Change is almost always unsettling, so the management team needs to be a settling influence.

Peter Sturrock, managing director of Ithaka Leadership Development,

has been involved in rescuing failing ERP implementations and has strong views on the subject. "Whether it be a large multi-site organisation, an acquisitive plc cascading its ERP into newly acquired companies, or a small- to medium-sized business on one site, there are critical leadership and cultural issues in these scenarios that need to be addressed properly for successful ERP implementation to be achieved. In many cases where ERP has failed, the underlying cause is poor leadership or management.

The large organisation is likely to form a dedicated implementation team. The challenge is to develop a high-performing team composed of seconded personnel, contracted consultants and representatives from the ERP specialist supplier. Uniting disparate people into an effective team requires professional and cohesive leadership skills, using competencies different to those that drive the implementation project forward. Teams left to evolve naturally all too often become very task focused on ERP implementation. This means that the hidden critical success factors do not get the attention they need. As a result, the team and project start failing to deliver.

The acquisitive company cascading its ERP into newly acquired companies with their differing cultures, face all of the issues discussed above. This is also compounded by having to consider how to merge the cultures of the two organisations and learn to work together.

The small- to medium-sized business may not have the opportunity to form a dedicated implementation team. Typically, the demands of the project are added to current responsibilities, creating a highly intensive, potentially stressful situation. Furthermore, some members of the management team may not see it as their project, rather as an IT and Finance project. Yet, buy-in of all from the outset is critical.

Smaller in scale, the team will be more accustomed to working together. But the business often lacks expertise in planning and delivering major, cross-functional projects, and consequently underestimates the effort required in the early stages. This later magnifies the resources required as the implementation deadline approaches. The small organisation also has the issue of developing how to work with the ERP organisation. These operate to



Peter Sturrock can be contacted on [peters@ithakaleadership.co.uk](mailto:peters@ithakaleadership.co.uk)

professional project management disciplines and rely on deliverables being met for their resource to be available at the right times. Failure by management to deliver results in project problems and/or slippage.

In all three scenarios, care should be taken to ensure that:

- The leader appointed needs to have their authority, responsibilities and accountability clearly defined
- The leadership team for the project is carefully selected
- As a new team, investment is made in their development to rapidly enable them to become a high performing team – the development process should be designed in a practical way to add real value to the project
- As pressures increase through the project life-cycle, the leader has an escape valve, an external mentor as a sounding board.
- Continuous performance improvement is maintained by the leadership team. Teams have often found that the use of an expert external facilitator helps the team resolve difficult, sensitive and potentially confrontational issues smoothly and effectively

In the rapidly consolidating world that is the fresh produce industry, where businesses are getting larger as a means of competing, change is inevitable.

New, more powerful systems are required to manage the more demanding processes involved in coping with the expanded organisations. Where new business management solutions are involved, the impact of changes on people within those organisations needs careful management to ensure their buy-in. As people are a company's most important asset, the role of management in leveraging the skills of those assets throughout this transition process is vital to the success of the business. ○