

Solution Showcase

Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Impartner PRM – A ‘Better Together’ Solution

CRM/PRM Transformation: A Powerful Revenue Stream for Your Partnership

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Abstract: Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solutions have become a foundational technology for corporations worldwide, and the playing field has been leveled. The thought of a company “building its own” CRM is rarely, if ever, a consideration. Ironically, while CRM solutions are critical to today’s corporations’ go-to-market architecture, to date, the bulk of technology spend has been on direct sales instead of the indirect sales that typically represent the majority of companies’ revenue.

That’s why, in 2019, the market has reached a tipping point, as companies realize that to truly transform their sales and marketing process, they need to shift that technology spend to their indirect sales channel, where the potential exists to make a much larger impact on revenue. Enter turnkey, out-of-the-box, contemporary Partner Relationship Management (PRM) solutions, which leading corporations are using to revolutionize the experience they create for their partners and optimize the performance of their channel.

More importantly, leading corporations are turning to technology vendors that can provide a proven CRM/PRM solution to support both their sales and channel technology stacks. ESG has found that there is a “better together” outcome: Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM combined with the easily-integrated Impartner PRM for Microsoft Dynamics 365.

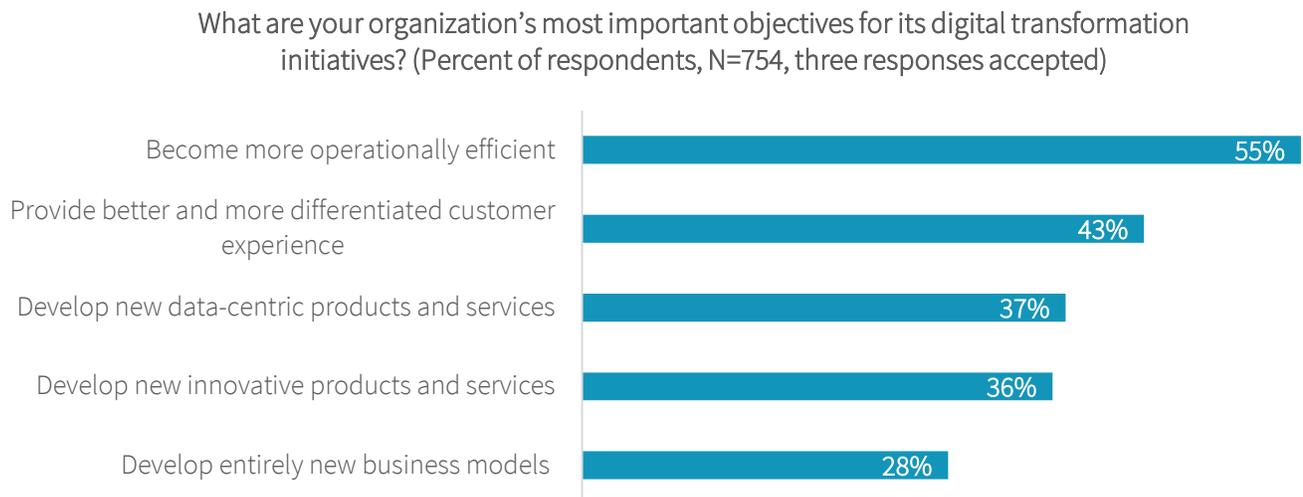
This is the story of how a Microsoft Dynamics value-added partner quickly and efficiently implemented a powerful, combined system for a leading global network infrastructure provider, creating a win for the customer and shining a light on a compelling new business opportunity for Dynamics 365 partners.

Analysis – Customer Case Study Outlines a Formula for Success

Introduction – Why Now?

We live in an increasingly channel-led world, where success is fueled by digital transformation and the power of integrated applications and data. In the *ESG 2019 Technology Spending Intentions Survey*, IT decision makers reported that their most common objectives for investing in digital transformation were improving operational efficiency and providing a better, more differentiated customer experience, each of which is critical to sales operations and success (see Figure 1).¹ Counterintuitively, many companies focus their technology spend on the direct part of their business, not the channel. They do not take full advantage of the leverage provided by the channel and under-realize its potential. This solution showcase shows the transformative power of shifting that spend to include channel technologies like PRM, thereby providing a differentiated experience to partners. Many companies now see the majority of their revenue flowing through the indirect channel, so investing in PRM positively affects a greater percentage of revenue than if that spend were focused mostly on direct selling.

Figure 1. Most Important Objectives for Digital Transformation Initiatives



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Setting the Stage

- **The Customer:** A multinational network infrastructure provider with over 20,000 employees worldwide and customers in over 130 countries, served by a network of several hundred partners.
- **The Partner:** Avtex Solutions, a full-service customer experience (CX) consulting and solution provider focused on helping organizations create better experiences for their customers. Avtex’s portfolio of solutions and services supports their unique approach to customer experience, which includes two key phases, CX transformation and CX orchestration. Avtex was a Microsoft Partner of the Year award winner in 2018.
- **The CRM Provider:** Microsoft (Microsoft Dynamics 365).
- **The PRM Provider:** Impartner, located near Salt Lake City, UT, and delivering the top pure play SaaS-based PRM solution.

¹ Source: ESG Master Survey Results, [2019 Technology Spending Intentions Survey](#), March 2019. All ESG research references and charts in this solution showcase have been taken from this master survey results set, unless otherwise noted.

The Customer Challenge

The end-customer was reliant on a highly customized system to manage its customer and partner relationships. With an annual contract end-date looming a few months away, they were facing significant annual renewal costs, and they felt they had to change the game, possibly even transitioning to a modern integrated CRM/PRM solution that met customer and partner team expectations regarding ease-of-use, similar to solutions found in consumer-type applications.

They considered the option of improving the existing, custom system, which would have required a choice between investing in a new GUI (further customization) and a portal rebuild, or starting over with completely new customized development. Any move to an alternative needed to be compelling to overcome any resistance to change.

Then someone on the team asked a great question: *“What other creative alternatives haven’t we looked at yet?”*

This simple question led to an acknowledgement that they weren’t using the existing system as a true PRM. Rather, it was mostly used as an extension of the CRM system to support just sales and marketing activities. With this on the table, it made sense to investigate moving their CRM needs to Dynamics 365 as the company was already heavily invested in Microsoft technology.

Replacing existing partner portal functionality on a fast-track implementation was a must-have, including ensuring a smooth transition of key elements used every day by their account managers during “deal-pursuit” in order to manually connect customer-facing information in the CRM tool with partner-facing information held in PRM, such as:

- Partner nomination, review, and approval.
- Deal registration.
- Deal tracking and sales management.
- Proposal and price approval.
- Opportunity rebates, warranties, and coupons.
- Legal and compliance requirements.

The Process

That was when the stars began to align around a truly transformational opportunity, driven by:

- A significant financial disadvantage for the customer to *not* make a change right away.
- Alignment with existing investment in Microsoft technology across the company.
- Realizing the benefits of transforming to fully leverage their direct and channel partner sellers.

With this in place, the parties worked together to develop a solution. Microsoft brought in Avtex from the beginning of the sales process, and they built rapport right away with the customer. Because Avtex had the specific skills to drive the implementation and had already taken companies to Dynamics 365, the customer was comfortable that they could both handle their global needs and would work with them to meet the aggressive timeline.

The next step was an evaluation of several portal/automation providers, including Microsoft’s in-house portal offer, and Impartner’s full-featured PRM solution using a like-for-like comparison and scorecard process, which included:

- Detailed evaluations of the technical architecture.
- Cost analysis—short and long term.
- Portal functionality and data handling capabilities.
- Speed and ease of implementation, configuration, and customization.

The Winning Solution – Making the Move to Dynamics 365 Paired with Impartner PRM

Because they were lacking critical PRM functionality and wanted it tightly integrated with Dynamics 365, it was important for the customer to have one company that was responsible for the transition to the combined CRM/PRM solution, so they embarked on a true collaborative process between customer, partner, and vendor teams. Key drivers to select Impartner as the PRM solution and Avtex to deliver the combined Dynamics 365/Impartner solution included the following:

- Tight integration of Impartner PRM with Dynamics 365 CRM.
- Impartner functionality within standard modules and add-ons met and exceeded their requirements.
- Impartner was the only contender that was viewed as investing heavily in working with Microsoft Dynamics 365, given its Impartner PRM for Microsoft Dynamics solution
- Everything Avtex needed for the build-out did not require a sync with a third party.
- Implementation time for Impartner could fit within the company's required transition window.

These factors, plus the strength of the individuals on the Avtex and Impartner teams, were deemed critical to ensure a faster implementation, reduce risk, and meet the aggressive timeline. Customer confidence followed as soon as the project started, and was rewarded with a positive, interactive process that delivered the joint solution that met and exceeded requirements, on time and on budget.

The Results – Delivering End-customer Value

Software alone doesn't create value, but an application that impacts business outcomes can deliver value far beyond any simple ROI calculation. In our discussions with key end-customer stakeholders, this value was created in several ways that started with "hard" savings in licensing and renewals (*"We're way ahead in \$"*). It has been followed in terms of force-multiplying savings around new and improved functionality that delivers an impact on business processes and sales efficiency and has led to stronger, more effective partner relationships.

Here is a summary of those value creators and why the customer reported *"Our economics got much, much better!"*

- Allowed them to move off of a highly-customized legacy implementation that was costly to maintain.
- Facilitated a complete reconfiguration, with advanced PRM capabilities and an expansion of existing CRM functionality within a compressed timeframe.
- Better integration between PRM and CRM extended value and impacted sales productivity by integrating their partners earlier into the quote phase.
- Upgrading to a modern, user-friendly interface improved utilization and productivity in-house and with partners.

What Microsoft Dynamics 365 Partners Should Take Away from This Case Study

Partners closely aligned with Microsoft Dynamics 365 will benefit from this partnership. Impartner products and embedded technology allow Dynamics 365 partners to deliver on the promise of digital transformation by providing relief from the heavy lifting of integrating to the solution stack as well as an easy way to integrate data with other applications, such as learning management systems, partner rewards, CPQ, special incentives, warranty, etc.

For Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM partners, the key takeaways from this case study show how the combined solution can have a powerful impact on their business going forward. As reported by Avtex, the following are some of the benefits of implementing Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Impartner PRM:

- Impartner is flexible and nimble organizationally, providing support and expertise as needed.
- Impartner is flexible and nimble architecturally to deliver simplicity/depth along with configurability.
- The need for updated partner portals and management tools is generally strong with Dynamics 365 clients, so they see many similar opportunities to help clients transform their operations.
- Current customer expectations regarding CRM/PRM will continue to expand, and they will look to integrate new divisions and companies onto the joint platform, creating up-sell, cross-sell, and new services opportunities.
- With a new, proven product set to take to market, organizations will have a new revenue/margin stream and better compete against other major competitors in the market with a powerful CRM/PRM solution.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Impartner's institutional channel knowledge is a critical advantage, as they provide Dynamics 365 CRM partners with best practice advice on structure, process, etc., to bridge the CRM and PRM worlds. This preserves and expands their investment in CRM expertise, and allows them to deliver outstanding results without first making a huge investment in PRM capability upfront.

The Bigger Truth – A Better Together Opportunity for Microsoft Dynamics 365 Partners

Partners and resellers are at the point of attack in the new world of digital transformation, and are counted on to create **real-world solutions for customers' business problems**. As such, they are constantly looking for not only new technologies, but also value-add products and services to help them evolve their businesses to meet the challenges of this new era.

Leading with and implementing a joint Microsoft Dynamics 365/Impartner PRM for Microsoft Dynamics 365 solution provides them the ability to **leverage their Dynamics 365 value proposition and then broaden that value through integration across the channel tech stack**. This enhances partner growth and profitability in several important ways:

- **Impartner is a robust platform** with a range of embedded, valuable features that are flexible and configurable and that integrate with existing tools in the Microsoft Dynamics 365 environment. This reduces cost, and importantly, customers understand the value of seamless integration services.
- **The total solutions solve a critical business problem for similar clients**. As a result, new sales and delivery cycles should be shorter and more predictable.
- **The ability to deliver incremental partner-led services** will drive strong top and bottom lines that fund growth.
- **Joint offerings create new high-value opportunities**, adding a strong installed-base value proposition to the sales mix.

- **Impartner PRM is a good fit with the skill sets of existing Dynamics 365-focused businesses.** This means partners can leverage the existing knowledge and experience of their sales and tech teams.
- **Partner upfront investment is modest.** Partners can satisfy their initial clients, develop “win” stories, and then pursue new ones, all while managing the financial risks.
- **PRM/CRM investments will drive revenue for resellers** based on the value they deliver.

Critically important for the long term, when Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Impartner PRM for Microsoft Dynamics 365 are packaged into a services-led, total solution around a specific business problem, these joint solutions become more strategic and provide **visibility and access “up the stack”** to CIOs and line-of-business influencers.

In closing, ESG has found that the ability to deliver a total **“better together” offering is a game-changer in terms of partner differentiation.** This can create a real, positive impact on a channel partner’s transformation, growth, and success. ESG expects to see that forward-looking partner teams and organizations will increasingly look to add this to their portfolio.

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