

“The Role Centres would probably be the most critical part of AX we can say we’ve got true benefit out of. Along with the sales cube it was a key motivator for us in selecting this specific business solution.”

– Craig Koetsier-Bakker,
Management/Financial Accountant, Mathias International



Mathias gets the smarts

Established in 1974, Mathias International Ltd is a private company with the reputation as one of the world’s foremost food commodity trading organisations.

Mathias is based in Auckland with offices in Melbourne, Dalian (Northeast China), London, Cape Town and Buenos Aires. Their team of professional marketers, suppliers and traders have wide ranging experience and in depth knowledge of all aspects of international meat, seafood and produce processing and marketing. They are backed by an equally experienced and talented logistics and financial team that together provide a comprehensive service to their customers. Across all branches the company has around 30 staff, the majority based in Auckland.

The company handles fresh and frozen lamb, mutton, beef, pork, poultry, seafood, fruit, vegetables and other exotic meats including venison and goat, all of which they buy and sell across 60 countries worldwide.

Over the last five years Mathias has experienced 20-30% growth, although like most others worldwide has experienced a temporary slowing of business over the last year.



A meaty solution

Up until 2009 Mathias used a selection of software solutions to run the business, including MYOB for financials and NZDocs for document management. With a high dependency on spread sheets there was plenty of potential for problems to occur as the deployed solutions were stretched beyond their intended use. These solutions were hosted in New Zealand apart from MYOB which was run from Australia, presenting both visibility issues and frustration for local staff as they struggled to use the solution across the network.

The decision in 2009 to implement Microsoft Dynamics AX with Koorb Consulting offered the company what they recognised as a ‘true benefit’ - a solution which was genuinely designed to run across a network.

Stars of the show

The key benefits and main attraction of the Microsoft Dynamics AX solution for Mathias were around the Business Intelligence (BI) and reporting functionality, specifically Role Centres and online analytical processing (OLAP) sales cube.

Industry: Commodity Trading
Project Type: ERP and BI

Quick Facts:

Website: www.mathias.co.nz	Workstations: 17 users	Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility across sales, customers and suppliers • Improved management of debtors resulting in positive impact on cash flow • Easy sharing of documents and information across the network • Alerts to highlight critical profitability levels on deals • Streamlined reporting • Self-management
Customer Size: Medium	Year: 2009	
Solutions: Microsoft® Dynamics AX 2009 Microsoft® Windows Server 2003 Microsoft® SQL Server 2005 Microsoft® SQL Reporting Server 2005 Microsoft® SQL Analysis Server 2005 Microsoft® Dynamics FRx Reporter Atlas XL - Globe Software	Functional areas: Financials, Fixed Assets (licensed but not used), Trade & Logistics and Business Analysis Scenario: Financial reporting Business analysis	



Role Centres are default home pages that provide an overview of information that is specific to the user's role, such as a task list, activities, frequently used links, and key business intelligence information.

An OLAP (Online analytical processing) cube allows near instantaneous reporting on large amounts of information - manipulating and analysing it from multiple perspectives, then presenting it in a meaningful fashion.

Leading role

Craig Koetsier-Bakker, Management/Financial Accountant for Mathias, is especially enthusiastic about the Role Centres. "The Role Centres would probably be the most critical part of AX we can say we've got true benefit out of. Along with the sales cube it was a key motivator for us in selecting this specific business solution."

Previously if a user wanted information it had to be downloaded and imported into Excel, massaged into context then disseminated appropriately. For example, there was reliance on the company's credit controller to download debtor's information on a weekly basis, format it and then send individual emails to all the traders to update them on the status of their respective debtors. With Role Centres, this information is now directly in front of the trader every time they log in, and is completely current. The trader can view, via an OLAP sales cube, the latest report on outstanding or overdue debtors and these can be sorted as required - by amount or due date etc., with just a single click. This ensures constant visibility and awareness of debtors by the traders, and therefore a positive impact on cash flow, with minimal effort.

Craig commented: "Now there is no excuse for our traders to not know on a day-to-day basis, where our debtors stand. The Role Centres and cubes also allow them to see how many sales orders they've got still open in the system, what's been sent away for shipment, what sales orders are going to ship in the next seven days, or which specific sales that are well below our expected profitability benchmarks. The sales cubes are displayed as graphical representations of empty tray or full trays, so at a glance the trader can tell, for example, if there are either too many debts outstanding or too many deals at a low margin."



"This sort of visibility is very effective; and as a result the debtors are under better control."

The Role Centres are also used to share documents. Where Craig would have previously been asked several times a week to supply copies of the same document, now all expense claim forms, travel forms and annual leave forms are available with one click directly from the Role Centre.

Information is also shared with traders using the announcement box to let others know what product they have access to which may be of interest to others. Craig explained: "We're back-to-back traders, so we don't buy something unless we've got someone to sell it to. If they hear in the market that someone's got surplus lamb at a good price they can let the rest know and they may be able to maximise the opportunity to sell it in another market."

This visibility extends throughout the company, as dependent on role, a total overview of all sales or debtors can be seen from a single vantage point. Alerts can be set up to notify traders and administration alike if a sale falls below an acceptable margin.

With just four hours training by Koorb, Craig was able to set up their Role Centres in-house. "Now we can easily build a basic role centre that's informative and useful within a few hours. I still want to achieve more using the sales cube, and that will take me a bit longer, but once again it still can be done in-house. It makes us quite independent. We have deployed a standardised format, so anybody talking to anybody else on the phone could actually look specifically at the same place and know what each other is looking at, but we are open to adding other functionality we see to be of value to all."

Sales cubes

Mathias is looking to make full use of the sales cube now they have a handle on the Role Centres.

The sales cube built by Koorb's BI team contains information from November 2009 onwards rather than all legacy data (although this can easily be done). However as this current data progressively grows over a longer period the value of the sales cube will also grow incrementally. The upcoming move to Excel 2010 and its more sophisticated pivot tables will enhance the functionality further.


"There's a huge benefit for the company in having visibility across our sales, customers and suppliers. Over the long term the sales cube is going to become a considerable asset to the company," said Craig.

From frustration to fantastic

Other BI development around reporting has taken the preparation of the weekly sales and margin reports down from four hours to half an hour. "The biggest frustration for us previously was that all our time was spent on working out the figures, rather than actually looking at the figures and making sure they're right. Now our time is spent far more effectively and in the right area. The report just creates itself, which is absolutely fantastic and the half hour we need now is just the time spent analysing it. That illustrates the sort of practical benefit the company is getting from investing in BI."

A team effort

In conjunction with Koorb and Microsoft Dynamics AX, Mathias International has become more efficient, achieved visibility company-wide and taken the large steps towards empowering themselves though taking ownership of the functionality enabled through their BI solutions.

"Koorb's BI team have been great," said Craig. "They've done everything we've asked of them, and done it well. The training they have provided has been fantastic and they've always been there to support me, even for the smallest query." 

About Koorb Consulting

Koorb is a 100% NZ owned company - privately owned and operated by the Directors, Nicholas Birch and Paul McDowell-Hook. Both Directors work in the company. The company was established over 12 years ago and has offices in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The main focus of our business is implementing and supporting Microsoft Dynamics AX and Dynamics CRM. Our 30+ certified consultants together comprise the largest Microsoft Dynamics AX and CRM practice in New Zealand. All are certified and have extensive and wide ranging industry experience.

We have implemented and are supporting close to 60% of all Dynamics AX sites in New Zealand. This is a direct reflection of our strong leadership, highly experienced people and proven methodology.

In both 2007 and 2010 we won the Microsoft Partner Award for the Dynamics ERP Solution of the Year.



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