



Microsoft Online Services Partner Solution Case Study



Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: IT Services

Partner Profile

Pittsburgh-based In4Arch is a Microsoft gold certified business solutions provider, software reseller, and independent software vendor.

Business Situation

To protect the customized, mission-critical applications that In4Arch builds, In4Arch clients need an enterprise-class infrastructure—but many lack the IT resources to support such an infrastructure.

Solution

Microsoft Online Services provides In4Arch clients with the enterprise-class infrastructure and support they need without having to maintain or support such an infrastructure in-house.

Benefits

- Expands reach to meet new opportunities
- Enables inexpensive access to enterprise-class services
- Increases revenue streams
- Advances trusted partner status

Online Services Open Doors to Delivery of Mission-Critical Customer Applications

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Gordon Salak, President, In4Arch

Pittsburgh-based service provider In4Arch could see many opportunities to foster productivity and create business efficiencies for its clients using tools such as Microsoft Office SharePoint® Server 2007 and Microsoft Office InfoPath® 2007. Many large companies are already using these tools and consider their custom built applications to be mission critical. Yet many of In4Arch's smaller clients were reluctant to pursue these more sophisticated applications. They did not have, and often could not justify acquiring, the IT resources to create or maintain an in-house infrastructure that would be reliable enough to support applications that could become so critical. When In4Arch began to propose using an infrastructure provided by Microsoft Online Services to support its InfoPath-based applications, however, it encountered a very different response and doors began to open.

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Situation

As a reseller of Microsoft Dynamics® GP, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based In4Arch helps organizations gain control of and maintain their financials. As an independent software vendor (ISV) that has developed a set of powerful commission management tools, In4Arch can easily extend the value of Dynamics GP for those clients that must manage commissions. And as a solution integrator, In4Arch can forge the links that bind operational and financial systems to form a cohesive, well-integrated enterprise solution.

One of the underlying elements in many of In4Arch's solutions integration efforts is Microsoft Office InfoPath 2007. Using InfoPath forms, In4Arch clients capture information about processes and events, initiate and approve requests, and much more. They can capture and archive all the information contained in the electronic forms to meet regulatory compliance using document libraries running on Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 or within Microsoft SQL Server® 2008.

These customized InfoPath-based applications can play such an important role in day-to-day operations that many In4Arch clients consider these applications to be mission-critical. Yet therein lies the challenge for many smaller In4Arch clients: they know they need these applications. They understand the benefits these applications can deliver. They simply do not have—or do not want to develop—the in-house IT resources needed to create or maintain an infrastructure to support these mission-critical applications.

Until now, the absence of a cost-effective, enterprise-class alternative to an in-house infrastructure had made it very hard for In4Arch and its clients to create the solutions their businesses needed. With the availability of the Business Productivity Online Suite from

Microsoft Online Services, however, a cost-effective, enterprise-class infrastructure is just a click away.

Solution

The Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services enables organizations to gain access to a range of enterprise-class services without having to maintain an in-house infrastructure for those services. Microsoft Online Services enables access to collaboration tools and shared workspaces, workflow, desktop and mobile e-mail, calendaring and contacts, instant messaging, presence, audio/video conferencing, and Web-conferencing. Yet because the applications supporting these services—including Microsoft SharePoint Online, Microsoft Exchange Online, Office Live Meeting, and Microsoft Office Communications Online—run on servers residing in a state-of-the-art Microsoft data center, none of the organizations using these services need to invest in on-premise infrastructure to take advantage of these services.

Microsoft hosts and maintains the servers with its own staff of application experts. It also stays on top of security patches and application updates so that In4Arch customers always have access to the latest, most up-to-date versions of the applications to which they subscribe. Availability and uptime are financially-backed by a service level agreement (SLA) from Microsoft Online Services, so subscribers know that their mission critical applications are in good hands.

The Business Productivity Online Suite offers still other advantages to In4Arch clients. Instead of having to purchase separate server and client licenses for infrastructure components such as Microsoft Office SharePoint Server (MOSS) or Microsoft Exchange Server, organizations using this service can simply subscribe to the applications they want to use. Users subscribe to the

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service on a per-user, per-month basis, which eliminates large up-front licensing costs and enables most organizations to cover the nominal expense of accessing these services using operational rather than capital budgets.

Benefits

For In4Arch, the Microsoft Online Services offering provides precisely the enterprise-class reliability, redundancy, availability, and performance that its customers want for supporting their mission-critical applications—and they can take advantage of this infrastructure quickly, with little up-front capital costs and almost no need for additional IT personnel. That opens doors for In4Arch that can lead to long term benefits—including increased recurring revenues and the ability to play a more important role as a trusted advisor to clients.

Opening the Door to Opportunity

The Business Productivity Online Suite provides a foundation upon which In4Arch can expand its reach to new customers, new segments, and new scenarios. Small and mid-sized organizations have shown great interest in taking advantage of the kinds of customized applications and workflows that In4Arch can build using InfoPath, SQL Server and Microsoft Office SharePoint Server. In the past, these organizations may not have pursued solutions based on these enterprise-class products because they do not have the IT resources to ensure the availability and integrity of the infrastructure.

With the availability of Microsoft SharePoint Online and the Business Productivity Online Suite, the need for a complex in-house infrastructure and in-house IT resources to maintain that infrastructure disappears. In4Arch can develop these important applications and workflows and rely on Microsoft Online Services to keep the infrastructure up and running. In4Arch clients can gain access to the kind of secure, redundant, reliable data

center environment, with 24 by7 staffing, to keep their applications going—and with almost no up-front costs and low capital investments. In4Arch clients simply subscribe to the Business Productivity Online Suite—which they can do with just a few clicks—and they gain access to the full range of services for a low per-month per-user subscription fee.

“The speed and the low cost with which our clients can take advantage of the Microsoft Online Services are prompting them to think about accessing infrastructure services in a new way,” says Salak. “This provides us with more opportunities to help our clients take advantage of cloud computing.”

Meeting the Need at TechSpec

The work that In4Arch has done with longtime customer TechSpec Incorporated (TSI) showcases this opportunity. TSI manufactures titanium mill products for aerospace, medical, and commercial customers, and In4Arch supports Dynamics GP deployment for the Derry, Pennsylvania-based company.

Companies that work with titanium are subject to strict regulations. They need to account for what they have manufactured and to whom they have sold their products. For 20 years, TSI had been relying on the same FoxPro-based system to track documentation within the expanding company, and the time had come to change. “We could have limped along with the same FoxPro-based document management system we’d been using,” says Doug Harvey, the Sales and Conversion Manager at TSI, “but we were very aware of the fact that if this system crashed we’d be in deep trouble.” Harvey began to talk to In4Arch about options that could help the growing company.

In4Arch proposed building a sophisticated document management and operational control system using InfoPath, SQL Server, and MOSS. This would have provided the

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functionality that TSI needed, but there was a problem: TSI did not have the IT infrastructure or personnel to support such a critical application environment. The company occupies eight buildings that stretch along a mountain ridge, and there is no direct network connecting them. To send e-mail from one building to another, they send the message out to the Internet and back down to the other building over a virtual private network maintained by a local Internet service provider. “And I’m the default IT guy,” says sales manager Harvey, “which is a bit scary.”

So In4Arch proposed deploying the same InfoPath solution using Microsoft SharePoint Online from Microsoft Online Services “All the InfoPath forms and document templates will reside in document libraries running on SharePoint Online,” says Salak. “Having those reside in a Microsoft Online Services data center provides the security, redundancy, disaster protection, and recovery support that TSI wants for its mission-critical applications.”

“Realistically, we’re a ‘tweener’ company,” says Harvey. “We have the need for a more sophisticated IT system, but we don’t have enough of an IT system that we can justify paying for someone who knows what they’re doing to maintain it. Using Microsoft Online Services takes our hands off some of the necessary but occasional maintenance issues. It gets us what we need without forcing us to commit to infrastructure and support that we can’t justify. We can focus our capital investment on the development of the software so that we don’t have to turn our world upside down to change everything we do with the information. We can build on the business processes we’ve already got and do them better.”

Growing Revenue

As a reseller of the Business Productivity Online Suite, In4Arch receives an annual recurring revenue stream from Microsoft for

the length of time its client’s contract is in place. Yet this only scratches the surface. By working closely with clients to overcome business challenges and by meeting their needs with low-cost enterprise-grade services, In4Arch quickly moves to a position of a trusted advisor. From that position, it can easily discover and meet other customer needs.

“We can get them up and running on the software and then add services over time. Many small businesses are wary of an approach where everything changes at once, and the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services enables us to move one step at a time. They can get comfortable with benefits of SharePoint Online, and then they can go down other paths as their business requires.”

Invigorating Business

“Microsoft Office SharePoint Server is already a well-known and successful product for collaboration and workflow among employees in large enterprises,” says Salak, “but Microsoft SharePoint Online makes the same benefits easily accessible to small and mid-sized businesses. There’s a real opportunity for us to provide services to small and mid-sized businesses that they might not otherwise be able to access.

“People see cloud computing as a compelling and innovative concept,” Salak goes on to say, “so when we talk about Microsoft Online Services our clients are pleased to collaborate with us to identify opportunities and assess cost benefits. That’s good for our clients and for our business.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about In4Arch products and services, call (888) 422-8221 or visit the Web site at: www.in4arch.com

Microsoft Online Services

Microsoft Online Services is a business-class communications and collaboration software offering delivered as a subscription service, hosted by Microsoft, and sold with partners. These services help make it easier for customers to rapidly and cost-effectively access the most up-to-date technologies, and are designed for rapid deployment to provide customers with streamlined communications, simplified management, and business-class reliability and security.

For IT staff, Microsoft Online Services helps reduce the burden of performing routine IT management tasks such as installation, provisioning, ongoing maintenance, patches, updates, and upgrades, making it possible for them to spend more time on initiatives that move the business forward. These services are backed by strong SLAs and are designed to meet the regulatory compliance and reliability needs of enterprise customers. On a technical level, the services boast the sophistication and reliability that customers expect from Microsoft, which continues to invest heavily in building data centers to support these services.

For more information, visit: www.microsoft.com/online

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