DXC TECHNOLOGY

Microsoft

Technology sea-change ensures Ports North can weather future storms

CUSTOMER
Ports North

LOCATION
Cairns, Australia

INDUSTRY
Travel, Transport & Hospitality / Public Sector

Challenge

- Reliance on spreadsheets and paper-based processes
- Unable to respond quickly to the needs of customers
- Need to mitigate the risk associated with ageing IT systems

Solution

- Implementation of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations
- Dynaway Advanced Asset Management
- ExFlow - AP Automation

Results

- Better insight into business performance
- Improved decision-making and strategic planning
- Easier access to information, increased productivity, and efficiencies
- Increased staff and customer satisfaction

Technology sea-change ensures Ports North can weather future storms

Ports North is a Queensland Government owned corporation responsible for the development and management of nine regional ports in Far North Queensland.

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General Manager,
Infrastructure and Technology,
Ports North

Headquartered in Cairns, Ports North has extensive marina and tourism facilities, and a range of strategic land holdings and properties across its ports.

Ports North plan, develop and manage port infrastructure and assets to improve port efficiency, meet the needs of its customers and contribute to sustainable regional development. Its operations and facilities are vital to the economic development of the regional centres it services and the State's tourism and export performance.

Mitigating the risk of ageing systems

After completing a strategic review of its operations, Ports North found that its core line-of-business systems were not adequately supporting its corporate objectives in an economy that was becoming increasingly competitive.

Jason Ledbury, General Manager, Infrastructure and Technology at Ports North, says the challenges it faced affected the entire organisation.

"We were operating in silos because our legacy systems didn't communicate well with each other. That meant we had difficulty obtaining good data and insights, which impacted our decision-making and strategic planning."

Due to the disconnected nature of its systems, the organisation dealt with customers in multiple ways, resulting in a less-than-satisfactory customer experience.

"Our IT systems were ageing, and we knew that was a risk, not only from an operational standpoint but from an organisational one as well as it was impacting our ability to attract and retain staff."

> "We realised we had incurred a significant technical debt challenge. We had built up legacy systems and processes over time that were hindering our ability to operate efficiently and prevented us from adapting quickly enough to meet the changing needs of our customers."
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According to Ledbury, employees felt they were working for a separate organisation depending on their department because they had to follow different processes to execute their duties.

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Need for system modernisation

Following its strategic review, Ports North initiated project SPUR (System and Process, Upgrade and Renewal) to improve business process efficiency.

"We wanted to uplift business capability and maturity across sustainability, growth and customer service management," explains Ledbury.

Having selected Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations, Ports North engaged DXC Technology as its systems integration partner based on its experience in leveraging Microsoft Business Applications to enable business process improvements, efficiency and sustainability across critical port operations.

"DXC stood out to Ports North because they had a tried and tested methodology", said Ledbury.

DXC Practice for Microsoft has successfully deployed Microsoft Dynamics 365 to many port operators to help modernise, simplify and accelerate the digital transformation of their business. Port operators use the functionality, business intelligence capabilities and cost reduction opportunities offered by Microsoft Dynamics 365 to future-proof business.

Ports North had a detailed list of outcomes it wanted SPUR to achieve. These included:

- **Reduce IT risks:** Invest in IT to address business risks, such as software/hardware failures and cyber security threats.

- **Streamline operations:** Automate or improve business processes across Ports North with modern systems, better integration, and a simpler IT landscape to eliminate single points of failure and manual tasks.

- **Boost productivity:** Reduce workarounds, streamline processes, and free up staff for more valuable work.

- **Faster, better reporting:** Generate timely and accurate reports for improved compliance and data-driven decisions.

- **Increase system reliability:** Improve reliability and resilience with modern technology.

- **Improve data management:** Ensure accurate data capture and reduce reliance on spreadsheets and paper-based processes.

- **Enhance customer experience:** Gain better visibility of customer interactions for better customer service management.

- **Improve employee experience:** Create a better work environment with higher morale and reporting structure flexibility.

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Asset management was another key area identified for improvement within project SPUR. Ports North opted to implement Dynaway Advanced Asset Management to further the maturity of its asset maintenance routines.

"Up to that point, our assets were managed manually using spreadsheets and sat outside our core reporting regime," says Ledbury.

"DXC's experience within the ports infrastructure was of great value to us, along with their experience digitising asset management processes. They had expertise in asset management, and adding Dynaway was a significant factor in ensuring the entire solution was fit for purpose."

A platform for future growth

Ledbury says most of the implementation was managed remotely as it was delivered throughout the height of the COVID-19 movement restrictions.

"This didn't impact the project significantly. We ensured everyone was supported and aware of how the new

systems would affect their day-to-day responsibilities."

According to Kate Deicke, Systems Accountant for Ports North, "DXC brought the project methodology, experience, and knowledge of the system. We had multiple training sessions with DXC and worked internally to ensure everyone had coverage."

DXC undertook an extensive test phase to close the project before the final go-live. This ensured a high level of confidence in the deployment, user readiness, and solution acceptance.

Ledbury says the benefits of the implementation are now becoming apparent with improved productivity thanks to the elimination of manual processes, particularly in the asset maintenance and reporting areas.

"We can do so much more as a business now", explained Ledbury. "We're getting real insights about how the business is performing, plus it allows us to take on more capabilities. We see an opportunity to have a new way of interacting with our customers through a portal – things like that are things we couldn't even dream of in the past."

Ports North has experienced a marked increase in employee satisfaction due to the new system's consistent user experience.

"The transition from spreadsheets to a fully integrated asset management system has delivered significant time and cost savings. We have also improved the timeliness of end-of-period reporting," said Ledbury.

Smooth sailing for the future

The most significant benefits of the new system include increased productivity and efficiencies, improved traceability and accountability, and easier access to information.

Procurement is one area which has improved significantly, says Deicke. "Our procurement processes were quite clunky, with many approvals happening outside the system. In the past, hard copy invoices would sit on someone's desk. Procurement approvals and a

whole raft of other workflow approvals are now happening within the system. This has made it much simpler to raise purchase orders and get them approved and has reduced our reliance on paper and email-based processes."

As part of the project, Ledbury adds there was also a need to develop customised components for managing customer billing for water and electricity metering. "DXC built a solution to meet Port's North needs, configured within Microsoft Dynamics 365 in a way that ensured the total solution was supportable into the future."

Ledbury continued, "Overall, we're seeing increased satisfaction from our staff and from our customers. We can generate better insights into business performance and have a platform on which we can implement future capabilities, such as our property solution, which we are currently in the process of rolling out. Armed with this technology, we are ready to engage in new markets.

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"I'd suggest other people looking to replace their core business application with a Microsoft Dynamics solution would do well to work with a partner like DXC to guide them on their journey. There are a lot of challenges, and it helps to have someone who's got the experience and know how.

"Now the project's gone live, DXC is still working with us. They continue to maintain Microsoft Dynamics and introduce continuous improvements for us as well. They're our support partner into the future."

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