



ISV Enhances Add-on Solutions for Next Version of ERP System by Using Managed Code

Overview

Country or Region: Netherlands
Industry: Software engineering

Partner Profile

AXtension bv is an independent software vendor based in the Netherlands that makes add-on solutions for Microsoft Dynamics AX.

Business Situation

The company saw an opportunity to migrate its add-on solutions to the next release of Microsoft Dynamics AX and bring more value to its customers.

Solution

AXtension took part in the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program for Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 to provide feedback on the solution and get a head start on migrating its add-ons.

Benefits

- Provide higher-quality add-on solutions
- Better align to customer needs
- Build new business opportunities

“The biggest opportunity in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is that we can now code by using the Microsoft .NET Framework. This will ease integration, improve security, and provide us with a lot of opportunities to enhance our solutions ...”

Nico Tissink, CEO, AXtension

AXtension bv is an independent software vendor that develops add-on solutions for Microsoft Dynamics AX. When Microsoft announced the availability of the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP) for Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, AXtension was quick to join. Through the TAP, AXtension gained prerelease access to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, providing feedback to Microsoft and working to migrate its seven add-ons to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 to take advantage of new capabilities. Because the new version uses Microsoft .NET managed code, AXtension can develop higher-quality add-ons that are more scalable and secure. The company can also take advantage of numerous .NET classes during development and a host of new features to better tailor solutions to customer needs. Now, AXtension finds itself better equipped to approach new market opportunities and ultimately grow as a business.



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Bart Versteegen, Product Manager,
AXtension

Situation

Based in the Netherlands, [AXtension by](#) is an independent software vendor (ISV) that develops add-on solutions for [Microsoft Dynamics AX](#). AXtension then sells these add-ons through a worldwide partner channel. Enabling these partners to deliver solutions that closely align with their customers' business requirements, AXtension delivers innovative and powerful solutions that add value to Microsoft Dynamics AX by improving and enhancing business processes.

AXtension's experience with Microsoft Dynamics AX goes back to the solution's very beginnings. "In 1997, we began as a software-engineering company that was an early adopter of object-oriented programming," says Nico Tissink, CEO of AXtension. "When Microsoft Dynamics AX, known then as Axapta, was released, it was an object-oriented and very forward-looking business management solution, so we chose to invest our time and effort as a company into it."

Since then, the company has developed seven add-on solutions for Microsoft Dynamics AX, of which several are Certified for Microsoft Dynamics; become a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and Microsoft Inner Circle Member; and achieved the prestigious 2010 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award for Western Europe. The company also won the Partner Innovation award for Microsoft Dynamics in 2009.

To help ensure that its solutions continue to meet the changing needs of the market, AXtension regularly participates in the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP) for Microsoft Dynamics AX. Through the TAP, AXtension gains access to prerelease versions of Microsoft Dynamics AX so that it can test and provide feedback

to Microsoft on the solution and get a head start on transitioning its add-ons to the new environment.

When Microsoft announced the TAP for the next release of Microsoft Dynamics AX, Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, the AXtension team was quick to join. Says Sandra van Leeuwen, Strategic Alliance Manager for AXtension, "It's very important for us that we can offer continuity to new and existing customers. When they invest in Microsoft Dynamics AX, they need to know the solution and its add-ons will be available and keep getting better with every release of the product. By being in the TAP, we can begin working as early as possible to update our add-ons and provide those customers with a future on their investment."

Solution

The AXtension team has begun to bring the advantages of Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 to its add-on solutions. Says Bart Versteegen, Product Manager for AXtension, "As we move our current solutions to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, we are first mapping all its new functionality to the add-ons we currently offer so that we can identify areas to provide added value to our customers."

Currently, the company is transitioning all seven of its add-ons to Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012. These add-ons include:

- [AXtension MatchPoint](#)—Enables messages from optical character recognition to be used to process invoice identification.
- [AXtension Advanced Production](#)—Provides a complete overview of capacity and reservations information.
- [AXtension Enterprise Content Management](#)—Bridges the gap between unstructured documents in Microsoft

SharePoint Server with structured data in Microsoft Dynamics AX.

- **AXtension Kitting**—Supports the easy creation of sales bills of materials for kits.
- **AXtension Sales Dashboard**—Displays all the relevant information about customers or prospects.
- **AXtension Visual Project Planning**—Provides robust and visual project-planning capabilities, including workflow, portals, business intelligence, and key performance indicators.
- **AXtension Wireless Warehousing**—Brings key warehousing functionality from Microsoft Dynamics AX to handheld devices.

With Microsoft releasing Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 in the near future, AXtension works diligently to build demand. “We have started by building awareness of our solutions,” says Tissink. “We are a gold sponsor for the Microsoft Dynamics AX Technical Conference and for Microsoft Convergence and we conduct a monthly webinar about our add-ons to a worldwide audience.”

Managed Code

Most important to the AXtension team, Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 enables the team to now write its add-ons as Microsoft .NET managed code. Says Tissink, “The biggest opportunity in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is that we can now code by using the Microsoft .NET Framework. This will ease integration, improve security, and provide us with a lot of opportunities to enhance our solutions through .NET managed code—for example, to provide even better graphical user interfaces.” With .NET managed code, the AXtension team can take advantage of a vast library of .NET classes to add functionality to its solutions without the need for extensive coding.

Enhanced Usability

Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 takes advantage of the Ribbon found in other Microsoft products like Microsoft Office. Bringing this interface to its add-ons, AXtension aims to improve usability. Says Verstegen, “The look and feel of Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is a big improvement. By developing our add-ons to those standards, we will provide big advantages for users, making it much easier for them to do their jobs.”

New Features

Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 also offers a host of other new features. Of the new features to bring to its solutions, Verstegen notes the new scheduler to be particularly attractive. He says, “For our Advanced Production solution, we can take advantage of a new scheduler in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 that provides much more functionality than we ever had in the past.”

Verstegen also sees the new manufacturing aspects of the solution to meet particular customer needs. “With the enhancements to the manufacturing capabilities in Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, we are seeing where we can bring those capabilities to our add-ons to broaden and enhance their features—for example, in production planning,” he says. Specifically, the company is excited about the ability to add the capability for companies to do their production planning based on employees’ skills.

AXtension is also excited about a host of other features, including integration with Microsoft Visual Studio to ease development. AXtension also expects particular benefits from the new case management capabilities, role-based policies, and easier integration with the Enterprise Portal in Microsoft Dynamics AX, which will help extend access to the ERP

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Nico Tissink, CEO, AXtension

solution to employees via powerful web portals.

Benefits

With each release of Microsoft Dynamics AX, AXtension continues to grow its add-on business, bringing new and exciting benefits to businesses around the world. “We have worked with many versions of Microsoft Dynamics AX,” says Tissink. “And now, with the announcement of the latest release, we see that Microsoft Dynamics AX is garnering much more attention as a complete, robust, and secure ERP offering. Our partners and their customers are already starting to look at the solution, so we expect substantial market growth.”

Provide Higher-Quality Add-on Solutions

By building its add-ons as .NET managed code, AXtension sees huge potential. Says Verstegen, “With our add-ons in .NET managed code, they are now of a higher quality; integration and upgrades are much easier; and we have so many more opportunities to add functionality to our solutions. In addition, the code we produce will be solid and reusable.”

Verstegen also notes that, “With the new concept of model distributions, we can simplify the infrastructure requirements of customers, because we can now combine the development of several of our solutions in only one application instead of one environment per solution. The effect of this is less time for upgrades and less hardware needed to support the solution.”

Better Align to Customer Needs

With more functionality at its disposal, AXtension finds that it will be able to more closely align its add-ons to customer needs. Says Verstegen, “Because Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 is so complete in functionality and we have been able to enhance our add-ons, we can now deliver solutions that more closely match our customers’ needs.”

Build New Business Opportunities

For an ISV, the next release of Microsoft Dynamics AX represents new business opportunities. “As Microsoft Dynamics AX continues to get better with every release, we see the market opportunity growing,” says Tissink. “More companies than ever before can use it, because ISVs are now able to more easily build powerful add-ons to meet the needs of new industries and bring to market solutions that are attractive to companies all the way in the upper midmarket and enterprise space. Microsoft Dynamics AX enhanced with add-ons, like those from AXtension, is stronger against competing ERP solutions. I think this is a big opportunity.”

Tissink adds, “We think that, with Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012, our growth as a company could be substantial. Over the last five years, we have grown 25 percent and we see that trend continuing.”

For More Information

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Microsoft Dynamics

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