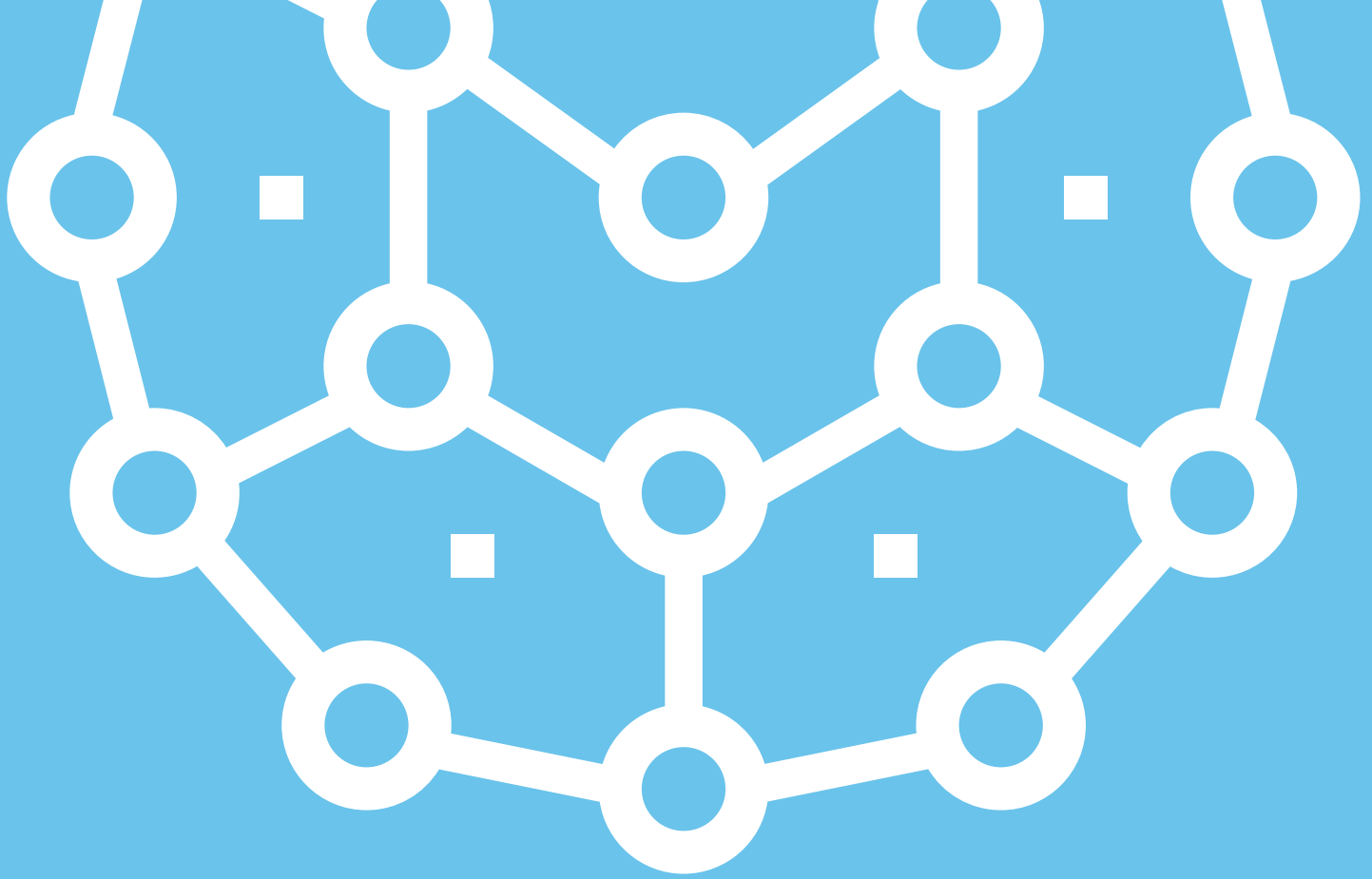




Microsoft Dynamics 365

Buyer's Guide for
Professional Services

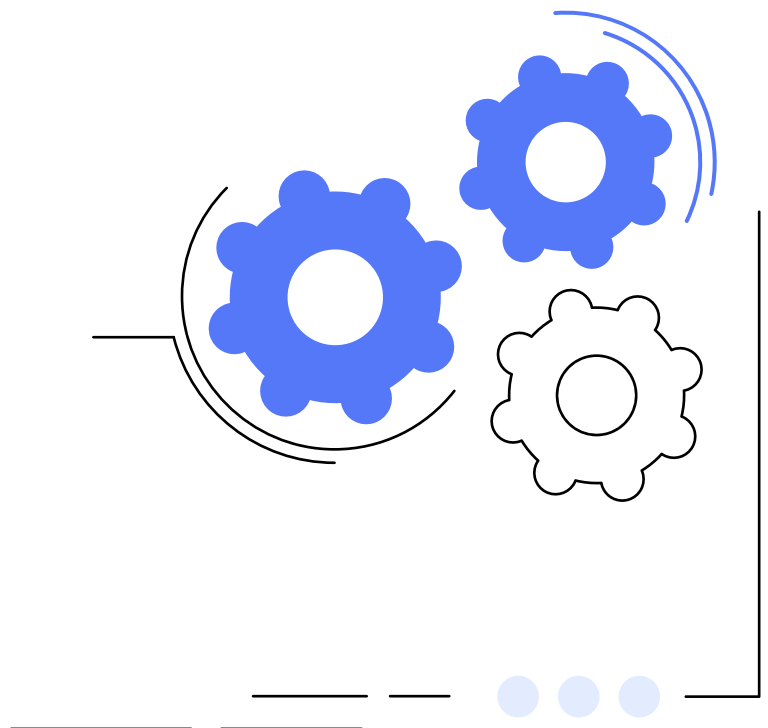
Velosio®

Introduction

Welcome to our Dynamics 365 Buyer's Guide for Professional Services firms. As a professional services firm, you know that time is money, and efficiency is key. Whether you're looking to streamline your operations, better manage your resources, or improve your project profitability, Microsoft Dynamics 365 has the tools and capabilities to help you achieve your goals.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the features and benefits of Dynamics 365 for Professional Services, provide you with key considerations for selecting the right solution for your business, and offer practical tips for successful implementation.

Whether you're just starting to explore the possibilities of Dynamics 365 or you're ready to make the move, this guide will provide you with the insights you need to make an informed decision and drive your business forward.



CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Dynamics 365





Run your professional services business better tomorrow than you do today. That is the underlying goal for just about every business. But what does it take?

People – You not only need people to work in your business, you need clients, partners, vendors, and more - and you need to keep track of them all.

Processes – The more clearly you define how you do what you do, the better your chances of success. When your people understand your processes and perform them correctly, everyone is working well together.

Planning – Nothing stays the same for long. Markets change. Clients needs change. Competition changes. The one thing that is constant is change. Planning helps you stay ahead of the curve and be prepared for change.

Platform – Everything you need to be successful needs to be well-managed. Long ago we realized that software could be used to help with that. More recently, we realized that everything works better when the software used to manage all the different things and functions is integrated to work well together into a unified platform.

Microsoft Dynamics 365: The Unified Platform

Unless you've been working with it recently, you're going to find out, as you read on, that Microsoft Dynamics 365 is way more than you thought it was. Most people first became aware of Microsoft Dynamics when Microsoft acquired a series of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solutions, using them to deliver four ERP products that would run on servers located on premises.

Going All-In with The Cloud

More recently, and in close alignment with the drive to Office 365, now Microsoft 365, and the Azure cloud platform, Microsoft improved upon all four on-premises products to create two comprehensive ERP platforms that are delivered as software-as-a-service (SaaS) from the cloud. Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central (BC) is ideal for the small to medium sized business, and Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance & Operations (F&O) is designed for enterprise use. Each of these platforms is a complete business process management software system that manages and integrates a company's financials, operations, commerce, reporting, manufacturing, human resource, and other activities. We'll focus more on each of these and what features are key for professional service firms later in this guide.

Along with these two ERP platforms, Microsoft also transitioned their customer relationship management (CRM) to the cloud as Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Customer Engagement. This platform is easily extensible to manage all the stages of a customer relationship, including Marketing, Sales, Customer Service, Field Service, and Project Service Automation. Moving the Microsoft Dynamics 365 family to the cloud removed the burden of operating computer services from the customers themselves and put it in the best possible hands, those of Microsoft's own experts.

Designed to Grow with You

Unlike most financial & operations software, Dynamics 365 goes well beyond day-to-day operations supporting extensive planning for future growth and then accommodating that growth with expansion capabilities that keep up with it.

Designed to Change and Improve with You

It wouldn't be Microsoft if they didn't also provide an extensive ability to adapt these platforms to specific business requirements in the form of programming tools that most users can master quickly, putting the power of programming into people's hands without the need to learn how to "code." With these, anyone who understands their own processes can develop highly useful applications to run with Dynamics that are "low-code/no-code" easily constructed using what Microsoft dubbed The Power Platform, which includes:

Power BI - Make informed, confident business decisions by putting data-driven insights into everyone's hands.

Power Apps - Turn ideas into organizational solutions by enabling everyone to build custom apps that solve business challenges.

Power Automate - Boost business productivity to get more done by giving everyone the ability to automate organizational processes.

Power Virtual Agents - Easily build chatbots to engage conversationally with your customers and employees—no coding required.

Data used by all these tools is conveniently stored, secured, and managed in the Dataverse, a singular repository through which all applications developed in the Power Platform may be shared. Data is integrated and disambiguated using the common data model, an open-sourced definition of modular and extensible business entities with semantic metadata that simplify the challenges of application development and data integration. Microsoft AppSource provides thousands of ISV-developed add-on solutions to Dynamics 365, ensuring your ability to easily customize the solution to your specific professional service business needs.

The Underlying Advantage of Cloud

Beyond removing the burden of basic computer operations from the customer, the most important advantage that comes from cloud-delivery of the entire ecosystem is agility. These cloud-based Microsoft products are not purchased. Instead, the customer simply subscribes to them. Various configurations of each service are available to better suit specific individuals in specific roles, and each subscription includes a specific rate based on a specific period of time commitment. The pain and frustration of evaluating and applying updates, fixes, and patches constantly is removed, as Dynamics 365 and Microsoft 365 users always receive whatever is necessary to keep them completely up-to-date on the most current versions of every application. At any point in time, customers may choose to expand their services, reduce them, adjust them to suit changes in their business, or decide to end using them altogether.

No longer are IT managers and their superiors trapped by their own investments. Customers choose to stay with their Microsoft platforms because they perform so well, so consistently, and offer such agility to adjust to any circumstance.

CHAPTER 2

Microsoft Solutions for the Professional Services Industry





In this chapter, you will learn more about the individual apps and services every professional service firm should evaluate. We'll look at all options and how they support professional services firms and where they might come up short.

Dynamics 365 Business Central

Dynamics 365 Business Central is an all-in-one SMB solution that covers everything from finance and sales to business intelligence, inventory, and project management. Inside you'll find project management features like project costing and accounting, resource optimization, capacity planning, plus real-time insights into project performance.

In-app reporting tools reveal real-time insights into resource utilization, project status, and profitability – allowing you to make smarter decisions based on the big picture. What's more, you can manage your core financials and sales processes in the same place as all project-specific activities.

D365 Business Central is a cloud-based solution that can help professional services businesses manage their finances, operations, and customer relationships. Here are some specific features of D365 Business Central that are particularly useful for professional services businesses:

Financial Management

D365 Business Central includes tools for managing financial operations, such as accounts payable and receivable, general ledger, cash management, and financial reporting. This allows businesses to track their financial performance, optimize cash flow, and make data-driven decisions.

Project Management

Many professional services businesses work on projects for clients. D365 Business Central includes project management tools that can help businesses manage all aspects of a project, from scheduling and resource allocation to budgeting and invoicing. This can help businesses to stay on track and ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget.

Service Management

D365 Business Central includes tools for managing service requests and contracts, making it easy to track service delivery, manage warranties, and schedule maintenance. This can help professional services businesses to ensure that they are meeting their service level agreements and providing high-quality services to their clients.

Analytics and Reporting

D365 Business Central includes robust reporting and analytics capabilities, allowing businesses to track key performance metrics and gain insights into their operations. This can help businesses identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions.

Overall, D365 Business Central can help professional services businesses to improve their financial management, project management, service delivery, and client management. By leveraging the various features of D365 Business Central, businesses can customize the platform to fit their unique needs and achieve their goals.

Dynamics 365 Finance & Operations

Unlike Business Central, Dynamics 365 Finance & Operations isn't an all-in-one solution.

Rather, it's a series of modules that focus on different parts of the business — be it HR, Supply Chain Management, or Project Operations. The idea is, you can build your own ERP — starting with D365 F&O as your base. D365 F&O covers all core financials including: general ledger, budgeting, financial reporting, cost accounting, AP & AR, fixed assets, and more.

Here are specific features of D365 F&O that are particularly useful for professional services businesses:

Project Accounting

D365 F&O includes project accounting tools that can help professional services businesses track time and expenses for projects, allocate resources, and invoice clients based on the work performed. This can help businesses to accurately track project costs and profitability, as well as ensure that they are billing clients correctly.

Resource Management

Professional services businesses rely heavily on their staff to deliver services, D365 F&O includes tools for managing human resources, such as recruitment, onboarding, and performance management. This can help businesses to optimize their workforce and ensure that they have the right people with the right skills to deliver high-quality services to their clients.

Time and Expense Tracking

For many professional services businesses, time and expense tracking is essential for billing clients and managing profitability. D365 F&O includes tools for tracking time and expenses, making it easy to create invoices and ensure that all billable hours and expenses are accurately recorded.

Financial Reporting and Analytics

D365 F&O includes powerful financial reporting and analytics tools that can help professional services businesses track key performance metrics and gain insights into their operations. This can help businesses to identify areas for improvement, optimize their financial performance, and make data-driven decisions.

Overall, D365 F&O can help professional services businesses to improve their financial management, resource planning, and client management. By leveraging the various features of D365 F&O, businesses can streamline their operations, increase profitability, and deliver highquality services to their clients.



Project Operations

When Dynamics 365 Project Operations joined Microsoft's suite of cloud-based business solutions, you may have wondered how it differed from previous project management apps. For example, D365 Project Service Automation (PSA) precedes D365 Project Operations. And then there's Microsoft Project, Microsoft Planner and D365 Finance & Operations - all of which also offer some project management capabilities.

But what makes Project Operations so different? And what prompted Microsoft to add yet another project management solution to the family?

Microsoft describes Project Operations as the application designed to connect your professional services business, end-to-end. So, you can handle projects from the quoting stage all the way through to financials.

This will help you gain the visibility, level of collaboration and agility required to drive success across the organization.

Thanks to its wide range of features and functionalities, Project Operations can be used by various employees across different job roles. This includes:

- Project managers
- Sales managers
- Resource managers
- Account managers
- Finance managers/project accountants
- Operations managers

So, why add another to the stack?

D365 Project Operations offers functionalities that the other apps do not offer individually. For example, Microsoft Project comes with planning and scheduling capabilities - but PSA doesn't. PSA, however, offers advanced sales and delivery functionalities. And D365 Finance obviously offers project management accounting, time and expense management features.

Project Operations offers all of these features (arguably the best of breed capabilities of the three aforementioned apps) in one solution. So, there's no need for you to invest in and work with multiple apps.

This means:

- Improved productivity and process efficiency as there's no need to switch from one solution to another
- Better data visibility as it's available in one place (one source of data truth)
- Unlocks cross-team, departmental and function collaboration as the solution can be used by more employees from different departments

And then there are more features, such as:

- Gantt charts and drag and drop functionality to further improve project planning
- Accounting functionality, thanks to integration to D365 F&O
- Dual Write functionality with Microsoft's Power Platform to ensure data is seamlessly integrated between your finance and operational systems
- By putting together the best features of the three existing project management tools (plus a few extras), Microsoft has created a 'complete' solution to help drive efficiency for professional services firms.

Key Features of Project Operations

Project management:

Ensure your project management team can access the exact tools they need to succeed. This includes:

- Customizable dashboards
- Interactive Gantt charts
- Work-breakdown structures
- Ability to create accurate estimates for labor and expenses
- Built-in insights into how projects are progressing (e.g. the ability to track planned-to-actual consumption) so you can make timely decisions

Resource optimization:

Thanks to a smart scheduling engine, Project Operations can help you assign the right people/resources to the right task at the right time. Using insights such as the employee's skill, availability and location, your project managers can:

- Maximize resource utilization
- Improve internal productivity
- Improve project success (and customer satisfaction)
- Better anticipate resourcing needs

Internal productivity tools:

Ensure your team is spending more time on value-added activities and less time on administrative tasks. For example, time and expense submission can be manual-heavy and time-consuming. This can lead to data inaccuracies which can affect future project planning and forecasting and cash flow.

Project Operations simplifies time tracking and expense management. Users can easily submit, approve and reconcile time and expenses wherever they're located (e.g. if they're at a client site they can use the D365 mobile app).

Communication tools:

One centralized solution means your team and clients can quickly and easily access the information they need, whenever they need it. An integration with Microsoft Teams, for example, also enables better internal and external communication.

Profit forecasting:

A unified sales management dashboard allows your team to easily view product and projectbased opportunities. All in one place. This can help them:

- Prioritize deals
- Highlight at-risk deals and take prompt action
- Identify the potential profitability of deals

As you can see, despite the similarities, Project Operations does differ from PSA. It's a worthy addition to Microsoft's project management family.

Professional Services Dynamics 365 ISV Solutions

Project-based businesses have complex billing needs that go beyond straightforward financials, project management, and real-time reporting. That's where Progressus (for D365 BC) and AXIO for Advanced Projects (for D365 F&O) come into play. These are extensions of the core Dynamics 365 solutions that help fill in the gaps of professional services functionality that Dynamics 365 solutions do not provide out of the box. Below are some examples of how Dynamics 365 ISV solutions can fill in the gaps.





Contract Lifecycle Management

Significantly extending the base functionality and simplifying contract administration and management



eBanking

Secure, Azure-based integration to all major banking systems



Advanced Revenue Management

Automation and support for multiple revenue streams and schedules down to the contract level



Integration Engine

Simple, secure integration with data beyond Common Data Services (CDS)



Visual Scheduling

Gantt chart control with visual scheduling native to Dynamics 365 Finance and Operations



Payroll Integration

Secure, Azure-based integration to all major payroll systems



Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement

Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement (CE, for short) is Microsoft's family of customer relationship management (CRM) apps. They're designed to streamline business processes, provide AI-driven insights, and drive growth by helping orgs manage and nurture customer relationships. Naturally, finding the right CRM is a critical priority for professional services firms, given that relationships are the driving force behind this business model.

D365 CE is a powerful tool that can help professional services businesses manage their customer relationships and streamline their operations. Here are some specific ways that professional services businesses can use D365 CE to fit their needs:

Managing Customer Relationships:

Professional services businesses rely heavily on building and maintaining strong customer relationships. With D365 CE, businesses can store all customer information in a single location, including contact information, communication history, and previous project billing. This enables businesses to better understand their customers' needs and preferences, allowing them to provide more personalized service and tailor their offerings accordingly.

Project Management:

Many professional services businesses work on projects for clients. D365 CE allows businesses to manage all aspects of a project, including scheduling and task management. This helps businesses to stay on track and ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget.

Sales and Marketing:

D365 CE includes powerful sales and marketing tools, such as lead and opportunity management, email marketing, and campaign tracking. These tools can help professional services businesses to generate new leads, convert them into customers, and track the success of their marketing efforts.

Overall, D365 CE can help professional services businesses to improve customer relationships, streamline operations, and increase profitability. By leveraging the various tools and features of D365 CE, businesses can customize the platform to fit their unique needs and achieve their goals.

CHAPTER 3

Your Dynamics 365 Implementation Partner



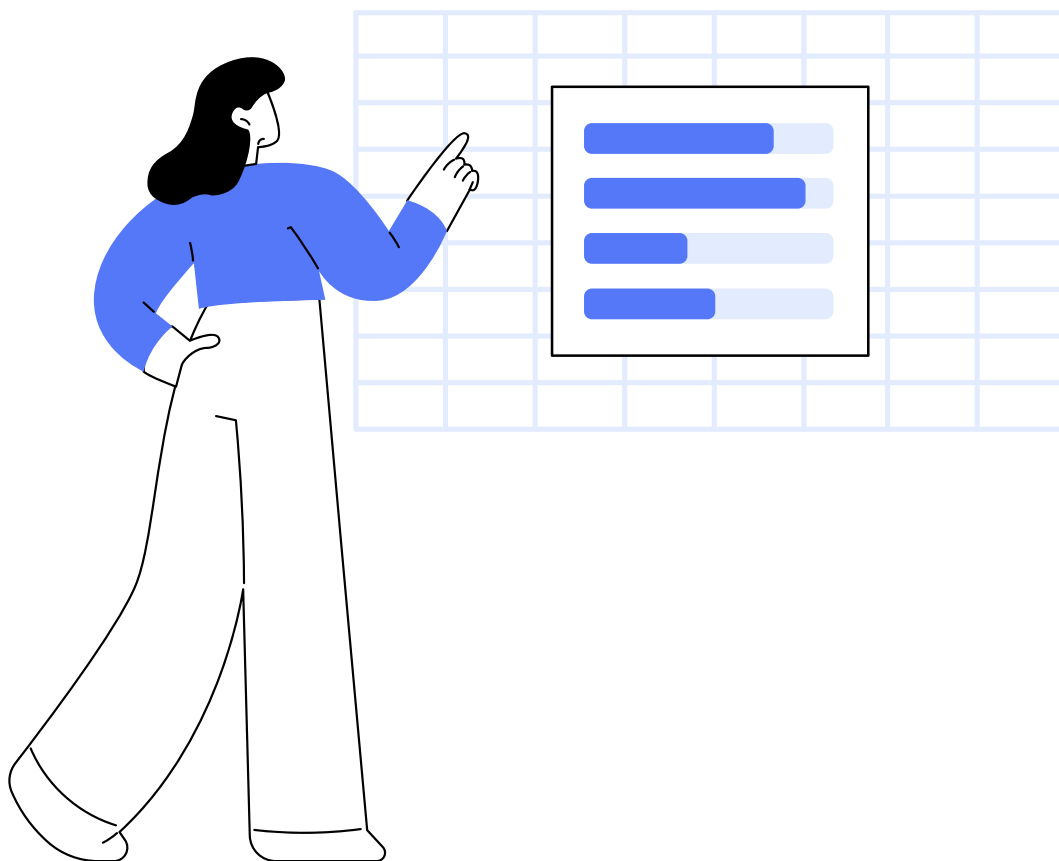
Remember that you're implementing Dynamics 365 to support your business, so you'll want to work with a partner organization that includes not only technology experts, but also experienced professionals from the professional services industry. People who speak your language. People who will understand and fully appreciate your concerns, your needs, and your requirements.

The solution to contending with this intentional complexity and achieving the most cost-effective licensing strategy begins with your selection of a Dynamics 365 Implementation Partner.

Velosio has proudly served the professional services industry for over 33 years with 800+ active customers and a 96% client retention rate. We craft professional services solutions built on industry-leading Dynamics 365 solutions. Our team of Professional Services consultants brings real-world experience combined with application expertise to your project, helping you select and implement optimal technology solutions that speed your time to value.

Our experts will help you understand:

- The relationship between your software tenant, environments, instances, assigned & unassigned users.
- Whether the professional license or enterprise license is appropriate for your company.
- Which agreement to enter into, volume, enterprise, Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) or Microsoft Products and Services Agreement (MPSA).
- Where to choose user licenses, attach licenses, base licenses, or device licenses.
- How all the rules vary from version to version, and application to application.



The role of your implementation partner is to handle all that complexity, do all that heavy lifting for you. We carefully examine your entire company and its operations. We develop an understanding and appreciation of your processes, and we then design a Dynamics 365 solution complete with all licensing and pricing for your approval. We'll explain every bit of it to your satisfaction, answer your questions, and provide you with the confidence of knowing you're selecting the best solution at the best pricing for your business. The process becomes clear and straightforward:





Many times, businesses pick a technology partner based on gut feeling and base it on who they liked the best. While following your instincts is important, you should also consider these objective criteria in your search for a Dynamics 365 partner.

Product knowledge – Your trusted Dynamics 365 partner should have in-depth product knowledge and understand the applications' capabilities, user interface, and customization options.

Industry experience – Your Dynamics 365 partner should have experience with the professional services industry. This means they are going to be familiar with your unique business needs and challenges.

Professional team – It is important to know who you will be working with so take some time to learn more about the team, experience, and passion for their projects. They should also match your working style.

Business values – Your technology partner should share the same company and personal values as yourself. They should be up-front and transparent about timelines, budgets, and extra costs.

Open communication – Open communication is vital to maintaining a transparent relationship. Prompt responsiveness is a good sign, especially when issues or questions arise.

Here are some questions to ask during your selection process to help you evaluate your potential Dynamics 365 partner:

- Have they worked with companies like yours?
- What do they know about the professional services industry?
- What can you expect from the implementation process?
- Will your new partner provide you with on-going support?
- How much experience do they have?
- What is their track record for project implementations?
- Are they able to provide 2-3 testimonials or client references?

With the right Dynamics 365 partner, you will be able to leverage the benefits of in-depth training, smooth implementation, and outstanding support and guidance long after the go-live date. Your partner will ensure your project stays on the right track, help you keep on budget and include the correct parameters to meet your business goals.

When you select a Dynamics 365 partner, remember that this is a partnership that lasts longterm. Being stuck in a bad partnership can be frustrating, costly, and result in a failed ERP implementation.

Finally, think about growth. Your company's growth. You want a partner that can not only expand to accommodate and support your organization as it grows, a partner who helps companies like yours grow.

About Velosio

Velosio is proud to fulfill and exceed all expectations for professional services firms.

Velosio's years of experience with business applications translate to a deep bench of tenured team members with competency across enterprise resource management (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), and cloud services. We have earned recognition from Microsoft as a top 1% performing partner worldwide. We have strategic independent software vendor (ISV) partnerships and a portfolio of solution and service offerings to accelerate what's next for your professional services business.

Our mission is to enable clients to realize business value faster, simplify the process of deploying technology, acquire deeper data-driven insights, and explore ongoing innovation to drive business forward. Beyond our expertise, as a Velosio client, you can leverage the Velosio network of peers, external resources and community events to help you on your journey to what's powering your business growth next.

We support the entire Microsoft Dynamics portfolio, Office 365 family and Azure services. Velosio is the only Microsoft Cloud Distributor that specializes in Dynamics 365 and is a prominent Microsoft Master VAR. Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, Velosio's 400 employees serve over 4,000 clients from more than 40 offices in the US and Canada.



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