

Case Study

**Green Beacon
Solutions
Helps Fashion
Accessories
First (FAF) Take
Business to the
Next Level
with Microsoft
Dynamics® AX**



FAF Improves Financial Visibility and Scales to Meet Customer Growth with Green Beacon and Microsoft Dynamics AX

Fashion Accessories First (FAF), one of the premier jewelry suppliers to the fashion and accessories industry in the United States, was experiencing rapid customer growth. The company needed to be able to scale quickly to manage the demands of these new customers and the thousands of transactional orders for fashion and accessories that would come in each week. At the same time, the company wanted to improve its financial visibility, gaining better insight into invoicing, profits and losses. It was time for FAF to move off of its home-grown, legacy ERP system and onto a newer, more efficient and effective system that could support the entire product lifecycle, from design management, to order, through delivery and payment.

FAF enlisted Green Beacon Solutions, an experienced and trusted consulting and Microsoft-based solution provider to implement Microsoft® Dynamics AX. "We chose to work with Green Beacon Solutions over the other solution providers we met with because Green Beacon could create a truly custom solution that would efficiently and effectively meet our needs," said Dan O'Donnell, IT Director at FAF. "The solution met our many requirements, and positions us well for further expansion."

Outgrowing a Legacy System

FAF's existing ERP system was a patchwork set of older solutions supported by four internal developers. Although the talented developers worked diligently to ensure the ERP system worked for the company, it still had a number of limitations. Specifically, the system provided no closed loop reporting, which meant, theoretically, invoices could be paid to suppliers without ever receiving the shipment. While the FAF process for designing, selling, procuring and delivering the jewelry was complex, and involved

At A Glance

•**Complete Product Lifecycle Management** - Green Beacon delivered a custom solution that allows FAF to manage design management to order fulfillment from a single system.

•**Improved Financial Visibility** - FAF now has complete visibility into financial exposure and performance at every step of the business process.

•**Significant Customer Growth** - The Dynamics AX solution has allowed FAF to handle 10x growth in its customer base in just one year.

Testimonial

"We chose to work with Green Beacon Solutions over the other solution providers we met with because Green Beacon could create a truly custom solution that would efficiently and effectively meet our needs. The solution met our many requirements, and positions us well for further expansion." - Dan O'Donnell, IT Director at FAF.

multiple departments and many steps, most of the tracking was done in individual Excel spreadsheets, and saved on desktops at various locations in the network. As a result, there was no set process and limited view into the supply chain. With large growth expected the company would need to make significant new hires to effectively support the huge number (thousands) of orders and transactions it would receive on a regular basis.

"Basically, the old process worked because we had smart people who worked hard, and a network of suppliers who were truly our trusted partners," said O'Donnell. "But as the business grew rapidly, it was going to be extremely time-consuming, prone to errors, and likely impossible to keep up without a new ERP system."

A Custom ERP Solution

As a 35-year-old company, FAF had sound processes in place, a solid business, and a talented and experienced team. The company recognized they needed a new technology-based solution to streamline their processes, improve reporting and financial visibility and ensure greater clarity into their existing business processes. With approximately 150 employees, FAF has a much higher transactional volume than other companies of its size. In fact the company routinely receives purchase orders that include 4,000 stores, 100 line items, and up to 500,000 transactional lines every week. First and foremost, the new ERP solution needed to enable the team to move this large volume of transactions through the system very quickly.

In addition, the finance team needed much greater visibility into the process. As commitments to purchase designs come in to FAF, the team moves forward to contact suppliers to create the jewelry. But FAF only receives the purchase order after production has begun, and then invoices the customers upon delivery of the end product. This means FAF takes on a financial burden in the middle of the process – and this needed to be reflected in the home office's accounting system.

Lastly, FAF wanted a system that would support the entire product lifecycle and provide greater visibility into design management, sales, purchase and delivery, ensuring that all information was tracked in a single centralized system, even as these steps took place across the globe - from supply chains in China, to warehouses on the West Coast, in Rhode Island and in Canada, before being shipped to their final destinations.

FAF and Green Beacon partnered to create a custom Dynamics AX solution that met the unique needs of the fashion accessory supplier. The solution included:

- **"Sandbox" for Product Lifecycle Management** – One of the custom modules Green Beacon created is a "sandbox" in which an entire "program" or collection of jewelry is managed. Once the programs are priced, customer service positions them to the clients, who give commitments to purchase. This entire process is managed in the Dynamics AX platform. O'Donnell reports that without the sandbox it would take an "army of people" to handle this process.
- **Delivery and Logistics Management** – Now shipping and fulfillment can be handled directly from the facilities in China, a step that never would have been possible with the old system. There is a complete view into the location of all materials at all times, whether they are on a ship in the middle of the ocean, or have arrived at a warehouse.

Testimonial

“Before we started with Green Beacon we had four large customers. A main goal of the company was to limit our exposure by diversifying our customer base. In the year we have been running on Dynamics AX we have expanded to 40 customers. This never would have been possible on the old system,” stated O’Donnell.

- **Closed Loop Financial Reporting** – With Dynamics AX there is the ability for constant checks and balances of the inventory and supply against payments and order processing. There is much greater visibility into the company’s financial exposure, profits and losses, which helps FAF plan for critical business decisions and future growth.

“The real value Green Beacon brings is in their flexibility and ability to design and deploy customizations quickly,” said O’Donnell. “We went live quickly and used an iterative process to deploy the solution. We were making changes daily and sometimes twice a day just to make sure it was running as efficiently as possible, and Green Beacon was extremely fast and responsive.”

Set for Future Growth

Green Beacon’s custom Dynamics AX solution provides the platform for growth that FAF requires. “Before we started with Green Beacon we had four large customers. A main goal of the company was to limit our exposure by diversifying our customer base. In the year we have been running on Dynamics AX we have expanded to 40 customers. This never would have been possible on the old system,” stated O’Donnell. Every time a new customer signs on with FAF they are added to the system, a step that previously would have required days of custom programming. Each customer still requires some amount of minor customization, related to shipping or invoicing, but FAF’s staff of talented developers is able to handle those issues quickly within Dynamics AX.”

About Green Beacon Solutions

Green Beacon Solutions provides integrated financial, supply chain, sales automation, and marketing business solutions built on proven Microsoft technologies. These business solutions include expert software, as well as strategic consulting and managed services that deliver proven business and technology solutions to mid-market and mid-enterprise customers in the banking, distribution, manufacturing and professional services industries. With a proven track record helping clients quickly and cost-effectively meet emerging opportunities since 2001, this has resulted in the successful delivery of hundreds of projects with measurable financial returns.