

CASE STUDY

LINEAR MOTION Aerospace & Defense

"With Alithya, we have found a partner that we can rely on not only for this implementation, but for future implementations as well. Our Microsoft Dynamics 365 deployment with them has provided several immediate improvements, allowing us to streamline our business operations. I don't believe we would have been as successful without Alithya."

Joe Sheridan, Director of Information Technology



Linear Motion LLC, aka Thomson Aerospace & Defense, a division of UMBAGROUP,

manufactures components for the aerospace and defense industry, with a product line including ball screws, linear bearings, electromechanical actuators, and repair and overhaul services. Linear Motion is headquartered in Saginaw, Michigan with almost 200 employees, while parent company UMBAGROUP S.p.A. is headquartered in Italy with a total of eight divisions in Europe and the United States.

UMBAGROUP was the very first Microsoft Dynamics 365 customer when Microsoft first released it to the public. Since then, the UMBAGROUP leadership team made the decision to deploy Dynamics 365 to all of its locations in Europe and the United States.

When Linear Motion was acquired by UMBAGROUP in 2018, it began a full review of its current business processes, which provided an opportunity to review and refine them with the release of a new ERP system. With all of UMBAGROUP's other locations on Dynamics 365, they set a date to terminate access to Linear Motion's old ERP system and move them to Dynamics 365, ready to meet the challenge of a rapid migration.

Key Benefits

- > Successful remote go-live
- > Refined business processes
- > Streamlined shop floor process
- > Little to no customizations to the system
- > Repeatable implementation template for new deployments
- > Out-of-the-box capabilities with the Power Platform
- > Utilization of the Dynamics platform
- > Standardized generation, revision, and control of master and table data
- > Ability to share data easier and more effectively

UMBRAGROUP's previous implementations of Dynamics 365 were done with a European based Microsoft partner, so Linear Motion's goal was to find a reliable partner in the United States.

The previous implementations of UMBRAGROUP's instance of Dynamics 365 were heavily customized, and it realized that with this next implementation, it now needed to rely more on configuration and business process changes within the organization instead of customizations to the system. The leadership team made the decision to deploy the organization's first Dynamics 365 instance with no customizations at all, requiring a new approach that could be replicated for future upgrades and deployments.

Per Mauro Angelo Bernareggi, Chief Information Officer, UMBRAGROUP, "Prior to implementing at Linear Motion in Michigan, UMBRAGROUP Global deployed a highly customized version of Microsoft Dynamics 365 Finance and Supply Chain. When it came time to move UMBRAGROUP North America to Dynamics 365 as well, we decided to change our implementation strategy."

Partnering with Alithya

According to Sheridan, "The decision to move forward with this deployment was already made during the acquisition process, but Alithya entered the picture as the best business partner for our US based operations. As I had positive experiences with Alithya in the past, I reached out to have a discussion around our goals. Its team initially worked with us to scope the effort, timeline and resource needs, but it evolved over time from a support role to really partnering with us through the project."

Linear Motion found the reliable, United States-based partner it was looking for—not only for this implementation, but also to support its Seattle location.

Bernareggi adds, "UMBRAGROUP Global made the decision to partner with Alithya to deploy a new instance of Dynamics 365 with almost no custom development. Together, we defined a totally different approach.

"Rather than trying to replicate our processes into the new instance, we instead worked to use the native Dynamics functionality. Alithya played a crucial role in supporting us in this effort."

Streamlining Business Operations

The deployment of the out-of-the-box version of Dynamics 365 at Linear Motion provided several immediate improvements, allowing it to streamline business operations. The deployment has also provided Linear Motion with the ability to build solutions around its base ERP system, including several Phase II improvement projects that are being fast-tracked to deliver immediate returns.

"It was a huge gain to establish a new platform of Dynamics 365, and this is the implementation approach we want to use going forward. It has really set a new standard for the organization on how to deploy a vanilla version of Dynamics 365 and to rely on the configuration and integrated solutions to manage the business. I think that was probably one of the biggest accomplishments that we've made, and then going forward, continuing to make across-the-board improvements without needing customizations," says Sheridan.

"I think it's given us an opportunity to rethink how to use the system. We have started looking at other capabilities that are offered out-of-the-box. We're looking at developing around the Power Platform with Power Automate and Power Apps capabilities. We're actually in the process of developing our first Power App that will really streamline our shop floor process," continues Sheridan, "And I think the goal is to continue to innovate through integration with what is available with Dynamics 365. I think we're just beginning to exploit with what the capabilities are and we continue month by month to review what's available. We work closely with Alithya to help us understand how to use these parts of the system that haven't been really discovered yet."

While this new version of Dynamics 365 is not customized like the version the global locations run on, it still allows Linear Motion to sync with the headquarters in Italy.

Bernareggi remarks, "By choosing this path, we have been able to standardize the generation, revision, and control of master and table data to allow for easier reporting and analysis. The Alithya team has brought great expertise and experience with integrating our two instances for financial data and operational KPI data. As we continue to grow our business, we have the ability to easily integrate and add acquired companies while sharing data easier and more effectively."

A Long Term Partnership

"The Alithya team that we worked with was very knowledgeable and worked well with our team. We have a great team here, so it was important to the success of the project that our teams collaborated in sync. This was a very stressful project with a tight deadline and a lot of work done by all involved. I don't believe we would have been as successful without Alithya," says Sheridan.

"The Alithya team complemented the project by offering a deep knowledge base with an understanding of how our business process could be applied to the system," he continues, "In addition to helping us implement some unique challenges. We have a fairly complex cost model and the financial consultant we worked with at Alithya had a lot of great knowledge and helped drive how we would accomplish implementing the cost model. We also had to manage our unique manufacturing platform approach on our shop floor plus the fact that our repair station and OEM processes are configured quite differently and needed to be managed separately. We were able to make it all work with Alithya's help."

With a tight time frame for the implementation, Alithya worked closely with the Linear Motion team to overcome many challenges they faced. Per Sheridan, "The Alithya team were major contributors to our project success."

While Linear Motion was ultimately forced to extend its go-live by 3 months due to data delivery issues from its previous ERP system, the Alithya team helped Linear Motion to catch up and successfully deploy Dynamics 365 with the ability to support all of its manufacturing processes at day one of go-live.

"WE LOOK AT THE ALITHYA TEAM AS NOT ONLY A LONGTERM PARTNER, BUT AS A PART OF OUR TEAM AND LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THEM ON OTHER PROJECTS. THE TEAM WE WORKED WITH WAS OUTSTANDING AND WE WERE ABLE TO RELY ON THEM TO PROVIDE A DEEP KNOWLEDGE BASE AND EXPERTISE. YOU CAN TELL IT COMES FROM THEIR YEARS OF IMPLEMENTING DYNAMICS 365 IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY. THE WAY IN WHICH THEY MAPPED OUR BUSINESS PROCESS IN THE BEGINNING WAS ALSO A DIFFERENTIATOR. IT SHOWED US HOW OUR BUSINESS PROCESSES COULD APPLY TO THE SYSTEM AND HELPED US ADAPT TO THE TECHNOLOGY."

- Joe Sheridan

Alithya is a leading strategy and digital technology company with over 2,000 highly skilled professionals delivering solutions across Canada, the US and Europe. Alithya's Microsoft practice covers a wide array of capabilities including Dynamics, Azure, business analytics, digital solutions, advanced analytics, application development and architecture. Focused on business outcomes, our combined companies have delivered Microsoft ERP, CRM, BI and digital solutions to over 1,200 clients. Alithya's global offering is to deliver strategy and digital technology services.