

## CASE STUDY

# SEKISUI VOLTEK Chemical Manufacturing

“Microsoft Dynamics is a tool that has fit in every scenario I’ve been in. It’s constantly evolving and driving change. Microsoft’s releases and enhancements help businesses stay on top with emerging technologies that help us do things faster—anywhere, anytime, anyplace. You really must focus on what tool is going to be the best tool for the job. And so far, I’ve found that to be Microsoft Dynamics.”

Maureen Hurley, Senior Technical Architect



Sekisui Voltek is the leading manufacturer of cross-linked polyolefin foam in North America. It is dedicated to problem solving, continuous improvement and complete customer satisfaction. Its products are used in many different industries, from healthcare and recreation to transportation and industrial applications.

In the past, Sekisui Voltek was faced with a number of business challenges. On the manufacturing floor, it was creating the highest quality foam while keeping an eye on safety. For management, it was to make proactive business decisions instead of reactive with the latest, up to date business information. Sales and Marketing were looking to be able to perform better customer relationship management and gain better understanding of its customers and their needs.

“The organization was still working in silos,” says Bill Harvey, director of information technology and digital transformation at Sekisui Voltek. “The office and manufacturing operations were two separate entities.

## Key Benefits

- > Improved communication eliminates information silos
- > Reduced administrative responsibility and technology overhead
- > Improved innovation and competitive edge
- > Flexibility supports growing business
- > Predictive analytics and machine learning provide proactive insight into business
- > Helps the company adhere to quality, regulatory and safety protocol
- > Gained customer and sales insights and information on new markets
- > Improved customer satisfaction
- > Saves time spent on administrative tasks
- > Improved operational excellence

Today, with our strategy being data, and data being the new currency, and needing to make fact-based decisions with analytics, we implemented an MES strategy along with an ERP strategy to integrate our ERP systems and our manufacturing execution systems to better utilize machine learning, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and more,” continues Harvey.

## A Proven Partner for Three Implementations

Bill Harvey and Maureen Hurley have both worked for three separate companies that have chosen Microsoft Dynamics solutions—partnering with Alithya at each company. “My experience with Alithya is that they basically have the breadth of expertise, not only the consultants that we need, but they have the implementation methodologies that we need,” says Harvey. “And they also have the inside track with Microsoft. To me as a decision maker, it’s very important for me to be able to have a roadmap because as a smaller to mid-size business, we have to implement in phases. And it’s excellent to have the feedback on product direction from Alithya,” continues Harvey. “ERP and CRM implementations are not easy journeys which shouldn’t be taken lightly. There are a lot of challenges to an implementation, but there are a lot of benefits too. Alithya is our partner of choice because they help us navigate both.”

Maureen Hurley recommends that businesses need a Microsoft partner who has: 1. Depth of knowledge in your vertical industry; 2. Knowledge of how to deploy Dynamics correctly and take advantage of its functionality; 3. A tight partnership with Microsoft to stay on top of product changes; and 4. An advanced user adoption methodology. “Alithya has all of these qualities,” says Hurley. “They know if users can’t use the product then the project has failed. Everybody failed, and they’re not afraid to bring that to the surface. Digital transformation isn’t just data, it’s about transforming your business to use better processes. Alithya challenges you and says, ‘Maybe you don’t want to customize that, maybe you really want to change your business process. Let us help you and show you how the tool can be valuable this way.’ And that positions you to continuously upgrade and continue to benefit from Microsoft Dynamics and emerging technologies as they evolve.

Keeping you ahead of your competition, and freeing you up to study, innovate, and focus on your core competencies. Alithya brings all of that to the table and I’ve used them multiple times on multiple successful deployments and it’s a fantastic experience,” continues Hurley.

## Cloud Benefits

With Microsoft Dynamics 365, Sekisui Voltek has moved to the cloud, and is experiencing many benefits. “I put my money in a bank because the bank can better secure it - they know what to do with it, and the cloud acts as a bank for your data,” describes Hurley. “Migrating to the cloud allows businesses to really focus on what it is that they want to deliver to their customers and they have peace of mind that the applications are constructed correctly; you’ve got, real skilled folks taking care of that for you. You don’t have to worry about all the overhead that ties you down during the day. For me, it reduces a lot of administrative responsibility and overhead,” continues Hurley.

Sekisui Voltek has benefited from the ability to conduct business anyplace, anywhere, and anytime. “Our users can now solve business problems, conduct and collaborate with their customers, connect with our supply chain and partners, business to business, customers to customers,” says Hurley. “It frees us up to be innovative and push our business forward in a positive way and beat out competitors. That digital feedback loop is really coming into play on top of the Power BI reporting, to drive business decisions and present the data that now tells a story and triggers an action, versus spending a lot of time analyzing those results. We can make faster measures to course-correct, faster communications back to our customer. And all that time that’s saved across the organization is now focused on core competency or unleashing more functionality within the tool. More innovation,” continues Hurley.

From Bill Harvey’s perspective, the cloud provides flexibility to the business. “Not only are the payment plans flexible, it’s flexible in supporting changing bandwidth needs over time,” say Harvey. “Disaster recovery and risk mitigation are things we’ve accomplished by moving to the cloud.

There's also increased security, and as a decision maker and a director with relatively small IT resources, we need to be able to keep our eye on compliance, regulations, security—all the things that we can transition and have other people do, controls our costs," continues Harvey.

## Deeper Insight into the Business

Microsoft Dynamics 365 has allowed Sekisui to have deeper insights into its business. "The digital feedback loop is collecting massive amounts of information that is vital for Sekisui to remain the number one, high quality foam producing organization, to distribute those products to its customers, on top of being able to course correct, understand what's going on from predictive analytics, and a machine learning perspective," says Hurley. "We are improving efficiencies and producing a better-quality product on top of servicing our customers in a more informed way, while moving the organization positively forward into new markets," continues Hurley.

For Bill Harvey, Microsoft Dynamics supports the company's overall business strategy with improved data governance. "Our business strategy based around data," says Harvey. "Not only collecting it but cleansing it, making fact-based decisions, and improving operational excellence to give us a competitive edge," continues Harvey.

Having implemented Microsoft Dynamics at three separate companies, Maureen Hurley has advice for other manufacturing companies that are just embarking on a new data strategy.

"My advice for manufacturers looking for a new ERP system is to really understand what it is you're trying to solve and understand what those requirements are and then look for a partner that's going to help you implement that and a tool that's going to make you successful," says Hurley. "You're usually not unique in what you do and there are already proven business processes to solve those requirements. Keep your mind open to accepting those proven business processes and looking at those out of the box capabilities that are there for you. Listen to folks that have taken that journey before you, the good, the bad, what to do, what not to do," concludes Hurley.

## Results for a Competitive Edge

Sekisui Voltek has experienced business benefits across many of its departments. "The sales and marketing side has seen tremendous value in being able to gain customer insights, sales insights, what markets to tap into," says Hurley. "We've seen improved customer satisfaction results, and now have more information on what to improve on in addition to the ability to offer proper quoting, pricing, and more," continues Hurley.

The company has also experienced benefits in manufacturing. "On the manufacturing floor we're seeing, what's in our production line, where can we course correct? What information can we gather? How do we improve our total process and keep that high-quality reputation for our product,?" says Hurley.

Microsoft Dynamics has helped the company maintain high quality products. Bill Harvey says: "What sets us apart from our competition is our quality. Because we are an ISO 9001 2015 Certified Organization, all our processes in manufacturing are not only documented, but they're strictly adhered to, ensuring that we provide the quality that our customers expect of us."

"Microsoft Dynamics is driving collaboration upstream, downstream, across the departments," says Hurley. "It's giving us much more positive team collaboration, more insight into how to better work together to solve problems. It's really positively impacting not just sales to our customers, but the entire organization and employee base," concludes Hurley.

**"OUR USERS CAN NOW SOLVE BUSINESS PROBLEMS, CONDUCT AND COLLABORATE WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS, CONNECT WITH OUR SUPPLY CHAIN AND PARTNERS, BUSINESS TO BUSINESS, CUSTOMERS TO CUSTOMERS. IT FREES US UP TO BE INNOVATIVE AND PUSH OUR BUSINESS FORWARD IN A POSITIVE WAY AND BEAT OUT COMPETITORS."**

– Maureen Hurley

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.