
Fast, Reliable, and Cost-Efficient ERP System Deployments with Cloud-Based Tool

With a new implementation tool for [Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012](#), called [RapidStart](#), Microsoft is making it possible to complete successful deployments of enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems in a very short timeframe. As RapidStart finds adoption by the Microsoft partners that implement Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 for customer businesses, customers and partners both stand to gain. Business customers can generate value from their technology spending much sooner than they would by following a traditional approach. Partners can complete more successful projects in less time and make better use of the skills and consulting resources in their organization.

A Microsoft partner with many years of experience working with [Microsoft Dynamics, Fine Solutions](#), collaborated with Microsoft in developing the questionnaires for RapidStart and testing the tool. Fine Solutions has made use of RapidStart since Microsoft released it.

Rapid Deployments, Competitive Advantages, and More Efficient Resource Utilization

Julie Hein, Vice President, Fundamentals Practice at Fine Solutions, manages the company's consultants. Hein joins sales conversations early on, analyzing customers' pain points, creating solution demos, and writing proposals. "Customers hear about RapidStart very early in the sales cycle," she says. "Many of them have heard that it can take more than a year to implement an Oracle or SAP system, and that many technology providers spend a large number of consulting hours to perform extensive analysis and design. When we tell them that we can get them up and running on Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 in 30 days, they are thrilled."

Fine Solutions has been using RapidStart largely to configure the ERP system's financial management capabilities—the general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and banking. Several projects currently underway extend RapidStart into other modules of the solution. Through word-of-mouth and Microsoft communications, prospective customers are already hearing about RapidStart and are approaching the company because of that approach. Hein comments, "One of our customers had worked with a technology vendor for more than a year to complete the deployment of an ERP system, and they were nowhere close when they decided to take a different direction. By using RapidStart, we succeeded in taking them live on Microsoft Dynamics AX in barely a month."

RapidStart: Simplified, Accelerated ERP System Configuration

To prepare a solution deployment with RapidStart, customers complete a series of questionnaires that cover the configurable details of the modules of Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012. Customers work through the framework on their own or with the help of their technology vendor. Once they have recorded all details for a module in RapidStart, they load them into the ERP system with a single click, at the same time saving all information in the cloud.

RapidStart templates and questionnaires incorporate industry-best practices from hundreds of implementations, which will work for most customers, most of the time. RapidStart data remain available in perpetuity; customers and their technology providers can always refer to it if they want to return to the original configuration or have questions about it.

RapidStart allows consultants to work with unprecedented efficiency. Roze Rich, Dynamics AX Functional Senior Consultant at Fine Solutions, says, "Since we adopted RapidStart as our preferred tool to bring data into the ERP system, I'm saving approximately 25 percent of my time. I don't have to prepare print-outs that I discuss with the customer, record the data, and key it into Microsoft Dynamics AX. Instead, I gather the information with customers in a single, collaborative process. I expect that, as I'm becoming more used to the tool and Microsoft continues to make it even more streamlined, I will save as much as 50 percent of my time." From her observation, Hein confirms, "Our consultants are all spending at least 25 percent less time on their deployment work, and the trend is toward greater time savings."

With RapidStart as a key resource, Fine Solutions is considering the deployment tool in its business planning. "We now can target many smaller companies that, before we worked with RapidStart, we might have hesitated to approach," says Hein. "We are preparing a fast-track, fixed-price implementation model that takes customers live on Microsoft Dynamics AX within 100 hours or less. With that, we will be able to go after markets where we don't have a presence so far."



Julie Hein, Vice President, Fundamentals Practice, Fine Solutions, and her team worked on RapidStart development and testing, and are using the tool in the field. "Customers have been delighted with the RapidStart approach," says Hein, "They are more actively involved in the solution deployment, have greater confidence in its success, and see value from Microsoft Dynamics AX in a very short time."

RapidStart also becomes a consideration in Fine Solutions's resource planning. "Because RapidStart offers clear, complete guidance on what we need from a customer to configure the ERP system, our most experienced team members can spend their time where it brings the most value to customers, and more junior consultants can complete the RapidStart questionnaires with customers and configure the solution in complete confidence," notes Hein.

Short Time-to-Value, Substantial Cost Savings, and More Reliable, Manageable ERP Implementations

For customers looking to bring a new ERP system into their organization, RapidStart offers increased control, a higher level of ownership, and the opportunity to realize solution benefits shortly after making a purchasing decision. In addition, because the RapidStart approach relies on standardized configurations, system maintenance and upgrades are likely to be easier to perform and take substantially less time. "Saving 25 percent or more on consulting hours and minimizing any disruption from making a new software system available to employees translate into significant cost savings for our customers," says Hein.

"RapidStart makes it easier for them to justify a decision for purchasing Microsoft Dynamics AX and working with us to deploy it."

Describing the collaborative RapidStart process, Rich says, "I meet with customers in person or online. We go through one module at a time, and I configure the system while we talk. If they are not sure about any of the information, I can show them samples of what generally works best. They can see what configurations will look like in the system, which makes them very comfortable in the project. They like how well-organized and smooth the process looks. The conversation is very effective and concise. At the end, I load the information into Microsoft Dynamics AX and we can move forward with a successful accomplishment." Audrey Wijaya, Associate Consultant at Fine Solutions, adds, "RapidStart makes configuration of an ERP system look very simple. Customers like that a lot. All they need to do is answer questions about their business. Most of them are completely straight-forward. I wish we would have had RapidStart back when I learned how to work with

Microsoft Dynamics AX, because even less experienced consultants can be effective with it and look very competent to the customer.”

For those customers who are comfortable with the tool, RapidStart provides the option of entering and loading their data without a consultant’s assistance. They can also assign certain areas of Microsoft Dynamics AX to key individuals, who can then gather and enter configuration data into RapidStart. “Some large customers like going through all the steps themselves,” Rich comments. “They have more control of the solution and get to work with it much sooner. That also means they can do their testing and training earlier, and roll the ERP system out to employees quickly, easing adoption.”

For Fine Solutions, RapidStart will be the standard implementation tool for all ERP projects. “We will see more savings and efficiencies as we grow with the tool, and so will our customers,” says Rich. “It’s very satisfying to be able to accomplish so much more with our time, exceed customers’ expectations, and hear from them that our projects go so much faster and smoother than they ever experienced with Oracle, SAP, and other competitors.”

Next Steps

- [Connect with Microsoft Dynamics.](#)
- [Read Microsoft Dynamics AX customer success stories.](#)