

Your ERP, Your Way DPOE Gears Up With MWAI FORZA SAP



DPOE CEO Chip Miceli

THE IMAGING CHANNEL had a chance to sit down recently with Chip Miceli, CEO of Des Plaines Office Equipment, and Mike Stramaglio, President and CEO of MWAI, and discuss how an ERP can literally change your world. Allow them to explain.

Chip – what made you decide to make the move to the MWAI FORZA SAP Business One product?

CM: I knew we needed a new ERP; we were having issues with the current one that we had. I was at the Executive Connection Summit (ECS) two years ago when I received a demonstration on MWAI FORZA SAP and realized that this was the way to go. It incorporates a robust accounting software package, which we really don't

have in our industry. When you look at the other ERPs, they are not accounting driven. This product basically forces you to be compliant and it makes you do the job right. With our old package, we could go in when we made a mistake and erase it and there was no tracking on it. One thing I've learned about MWAI FORZA SAP is that it tracks all the errors that you need to fix, so it allows you to be able to figure out what happened and what you have to do to go forward.

So the audit trail inherent within the system is important to you?

CM: I was listening to a clip from Rick Taylor about the software a few days ago and I think he said it best: Konica Minolta has been on the enterprise version of SAP for a long time and they make sure to implement it into any of the companies they buy as soon as possible after the acquisition. He said that once he plugs in the figures of a company he buys, he almost immediately finds improved productivity and he finds profitability [slight chuckle]. That's something we definitely need in our industry.

What pain points were you having at your dealership that you wanted to address with this new ERP? Obviously accounting seems to be a big one but what else do you see MWAI FORZA SAP Business One doing for you?

CM: I believe it's going to improve

my productivity. We are also going to be able to track everything that is going on a lot better – and in real time. We are going to be able to find the loopholes where I am losing money, and fix those immediately instead of having to wait until the end of the quarter or the end of the month to find out “I've got an issue – why didn't we see this three weeks ago?”

How do you think the industry would most benefit by using MWAI FORZA SAP?

CM: MWAI FORZA SAP has a lot of flexibility. Our old industry ERPs did not address business lines like Managed Network Services (MNS) and security that many organizations have gotten into. We have to go to a third-party software bolt-on and add it into the ERP. Autotask is a good example. We have to input everything into Autotask and then we have to move everything over to our ERP. MWAI FORZA SAP seamlessly integrates, so that entire step can be eliminated.

What I really like about this product is that I am not going to have any more bolt-ons. With my old software, every time they upgraded to a new package, nobody was able to upgrade at the same time. I would have to wait a year for my CRM bolt-on to get current with the new upgrade. My other bolt-ons, such as BEI for service, also didn't upgrade as fast as when the upgrade was out – the manufacturer didn't coordinate with the third-party

vendors and would just present an upgrade periodically without notice, and then everyone would have to scramble to adjust.

We made the mistake of upgrading a few times without checking, assuming it was already adjusted with the third-party software we use and bam! Upgrading would bring our CRM down, BEI Services would be down, CEO Juice would be down. With MWai FORZA SAP we don't have bolt-ons anymore. Everything is built in, so now when an update comes out, we will be updated at the same time and I don't have to worry anymore about what I have tied in to the software that might need to be addressed separately and on a different time frame from my ERP.

MS: I think where you start to see some value for the industry long term is in the enterprise power that has been put into the hands

of the independent dealer. Two-thirds of the equipment OEMs are on SAP and the other third is on Oracle. Now all of a sudden the independent dealer operating on MWai FORZA has the same type of horsepower as the major OEMs to strategically manage assets, client bases and future business. That's never been an option before.

With this product, machines can be directly integrated into the system, vastly improving metering data and the ability to manage the new information coming from connected devices and the Internet of Things (IoT). The dealership of the future is going to be driven by data and intelligence — FORZA and SAP combined really give that kind of data power to an independent dealer that they've never had before.

What words of advice would you give a dealer that is considering FORZA?

CM: I would show them the dashboard because I think that is what is going to wow everybody. We've been looking for that kind of dashboard in our industry for years.

The second thing I would tell people is that you have to be patient with it because it doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. The support has been excellent. Even if you are thinking you don't want to do this until the first of the year, which most people are going to say — this is the time to sign the contract and start prepping your organization for it. Attend the training webinars now, get well versed in the product. Then the implementation comes a lot quicker and a lot smoother. For us, everything was already set up in the system before we went live — our chart of accounts, our contracts, etc.

What would you say to the dealers that are on a different platform, thinking about making a switch?

CM: Most of the dealers out there are on one of four platforms — LaCrosse, which is really obsolete at this point, OMD which is close to becoming obsolete, eAutomate, which is in stagnant mode because the vendor is not spending money to enhance the product, and then there are the home-grown systems.

I would tell them that they need to look at a product that is going to help them grow their business, give them the productivity that they need to succeed and that will give them real-time profitability. They need



THE DASHBOARD. "That is what is going to wow everybody" says Miceli.

software that will allow them to know if they are having a problem so that it can be addressed immediately, instead of at the end of the month or the end of the quarter. MWAi FORZA SAP gives you the capability of seeing at a glance, first thing every morning, where you stand in relation to your month, quarter and year on multiple levels. From a productivity standpoint, for an owner, that's a big advantage.

What is your favorite part or greatest unexpected benefit of FORZA?

CM: The fact that I could learn how to use the system extremely quickly.

How influential was your MNS and MPS business when considering the decision to move to FORZA?

CM: When I saw MWAi FORZA SAP I could see that it would streamline my business needs. My current software was not capable of doing that for me — all the bolt-ons and other issues that I mentioned before made it too difficult to be useful.

With the influence of cloud based solutions and applications and the Internet of Things, how important is SAP and FORZA for the imaging channel?

CM: Cloud is going to be big for us because it is recurring revenue. I don't recommend that dealers build their own cloud, but I do recommend that they sell cloud services and they can buy what they need from someone that already has invested in the


infrastructure to build a cloud and has capacity. I also feel we will be able to track the revenue stream better with the MWAi FORZA SAP product; something we couldn't do in our old ERPs. Everything is now coming in under one umbrella — if I want to see what my IT business line is doing, I don't have to go to Autotask to see how many calls the NOC has up or how many calls the engineers have and whether they are behind. That's on the dashboard so I can see the status with a quick glance. This gives me the capability to make sure that I'm not short staffed. With MNS, you can end up signing on lots of customers quickly and before you know it you are stretched and the team doesn't typically realize it until it is too late. You can also see where you are over-staffed and you can reduce the staffing there. It goes both ways. If the revenue stream isn't coming in for a particular part of the business, it also allows you to evaluate that and make adjustments.

MS: I read a quote just a little while ago that stated "if you are not in the cloud, you won't 'be.'" When you have the two leading ERP companies in the world saying those things and then you have Cisco, IBM and others behind it — Chip is right — for an independent dealer, ultimately you will be in the cloud and the recurring revenue is critically important to not just the legacy business today but all future business.

I think that is going to help the dealer make their decision about which ERP they should go with and why they should make a

switch. The cloud is real, the cloud is going to happen, the cloud is going to drive revenue, it is going to drive productivity and net income improvement and it's going to allow for all things to be connected. I think it's going to challenge our industry in a very dramatic way, very quickly because if you thought bolt-ons were a problem before, just imagine how complex that will be if you can't bring it into a centralized environment and serve it up to the cloud.

How important was the strength of partnership between MWAi and SAP and the industry when you were evaluating the FORZA product?

CM: I was familiar with the strength of SAP Business One because of the fact that it's been around for a long time and I already use it with some of my vendors to get into their systems. Now we get to see what power MWAi adds to SAP Business One with FORZA; we get to watch that evolve and I think that product is going to continue to develop. MWAi has a great team of people that can sit down and say "Hey — we can make that happen" and then they figure out a way to make it happen. I believe with SAP supporting them, they are going to have the flexibility they need to develop a package that is going to be one of the best packages in the industry. 

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dpoe.com
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