



Client interview



# What matters to UAP is trusted partnerships to enable growth

Do what matters

UAP is Canada's leading distributor of parts and replacement parts for cars and heavy vehicles. For the company's Heavy Vehicle division, the ERP system is core to supporting business operations. When UAP's existing Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 solution reached its end of life, leaders made the decision to partner with Avanade and upgrade to [Microsoft Dynamics 365](#), giving employees a strong, reliable and user-friendly platform that improves the workplace experience and paves the way for future growth.

**Company name:** UAP

**Country:** Canada

**Industry:** Manufacturing

**Employees:** ~5,000

**Solution:** Microsoft Dynamics 365

To learn more about the upgrade and the partnership that made it so successful, we had a chat with Raynald Paquin, Senior Director of IT at UAP. Here's what he shared:

## What challenges were you facing with your previous ERP system that led to your Dynamics 365 upgrade?

"We had been running an on-prem Microsoft Dynamics AX 2012 ERP for six or seven years. It took us awhile to implement it, and we had built an internal team of talent with the IT skillset to do the implementation ourselves. However, we knew we needed to upgrade to a cloud solution because Microsoft was no longer supporting Dynamics AX. So, we needed a partner to help us make that upgrade fast, while ramping up our internal resources on this new technology."

## Why was Dynamics 365 the right solution for your needs?

### Did you look at any other options besides Microsoft?

"When starting this kind of project, we look at all the options available to make sure we select the right one for us. In this particular case, Dynamics 365 quickly stood out as being the best solution for our needs. During the initial assessment we did with Avanade, we looked at all our business processes, looked at all the variables, and really verified that we were on the right track with Dynamics 365. There were no surprises – it met all our needs. It's flexible enough to support our business and it's simple to use for our people. Avanade helped us confirm that cloud architecture was viable and wouldn't be a challenge, so that gave us a huge amount of confidence moving forward."

## Did you face any roadblocks during the upgrade?

"Another important topic for us was the capability to convert the customizations we had made over the years from AX 2012 to D365. Avanade helped us do that successfully so that the change was minimal on our user community. We had thousands of days of development built into the existing system. So, in terms of dealing with those customizations, this wasn't a simple upgrade, but Avanade helped us migrate our custom codes to the new platform successfully."

## How did we help you overcome these challenges?

"With Avanade, we have a real sense of teamwork. I've seen it many times throughout my career with different partners, where it doesn't come together that way and just stays 'us' versus 'them.' But our project manager at UAP and the project manager from Avanade were such a great team and we always felt like any challenges were under control and that everyone could interact easily with each other."

If you want to achieve something big, you need to have strong leaders who can tell each other the real story, be honest about challenges and come up with solutions and action items to fix them. We have that with Avanade."

## **We know that a positive employee experience is important to UAP. How have your employees embraced the new platform? How did you help them get comfortable with new tools?**

“Our people are comfortable and familiar with Dynamics 365 now. When we originally implemented Dynamics AX, we were moving to it from a completely homegrown system. So, the jump from that system Dynamics AX was more of a leap.

We knew that the UX wouldn't be a problem, but it was very important to share the benefits of the new platform with our employees along the way. We made it clear that they wouldn't lose anything in terms of business capability coverage. The screens might look a little bit different, but they're still able to perform the same tasks we did before the upgrade. We also promoted the benefits of moving to the cloud – performance is faster, and they're able to access the tools on their mobile devices as well.”

## **What other benefits has the new platform unlocked for your people and your business?**

“It's really quite simple: With Dynamics 365, we've positioned ourselves to do more business, open more branches, more distribution centers, handle more products. Our core system performs better, and that's really the key for success. We were at the limit with Dynamics AX, but now our growth potential is huge.

Our people are also able to do things faster. As an example, price changes, discounts, promotions and exchange rate changes get applied much faster in the field than before. This is key when you want to make decisions and position yourself better on the market. That alone is a huge benefit, and we still have plenty of resources to manage even more volume eventually.”

## **What matters to UAP when it comes to this kind of project?**

“What matters to us is to feel like we have the right partners, and that means a partner that's easily accessible and has a deep knowledge of our industry and our business. Since the beginning of this project, we've felt like we can always approach Avanade – even for an impromptu meeting – and have open discussions. They have the experience to know what we can do differently, and it almost feels like they've worked at UAP with their knowledge of our company. For us, that's so important.

If you have the combination of strong internal resources, strong project leadership and sponsorship and a partner like Avanade, you have everything to achieve great things.”



## **About UAP**

UAP is Canada's leading distributor and merchandiser of automotive parts and replacement accessories for cars and heavy vehicles. We are also a subsidiary of Genuine Parts Company (GPC), the largest vehicle parts distribution network in North America, which is headquartered in the United States. Combining an international presence with a local approach, GPC allows us to reinforce our leadership position and benefit from both a solid distribution network and proximity to our communities in Canada.



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**About Avanade**

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 60,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

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