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Fast Facts

Company Profile

Six Flags, the world's largest regional theme and water park operator, has experienced explosive growth. With 39 parks in 8 countries, Six Flags hosts nearly 50 million visitors annually.

Industry

Media and Entertainment

Geography

United States

Challenges

Extreme growth was outpacing Six Flags' ability to efficiently integrate distribution processes and global reporting requirements.

Solution

Six Flags selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® as the business management solution to interconnect their global business.

Results

- ◆ Global financial insight
- ◆ Improved inventory management
- ◆ Streamlined reporting
- ◆ Improved business processes
- ◆ Annual savings of \$1 million

Case Study

Six Flags Affords Thrill Rides and Grounded Financial Management

Entertaining nearly 50 million guests annually at 39 different theme and water parks located across eight different countries, all while growing a multi-national organization, is not an easy task. Six Flags' many parks were each running different general ledger systems. They needed a single, integrated business solution to span the parks' diverse business management needs and reduce the cost of ownership of the disparate systems. Microsoft Business Solutions–Great Plains (now part of Microsoft Dynamics™) provided Six Flags with immediate insight into their financial operations around the globe. It streamlined financial reporting, provided quick analysis of financial data, improved inventory management, improved business processes, and resulted in expense savings of close to \$1 million USD annually.

Situation

Worldwide Family Fun

Based out of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Six Flags is the world's largest regional theme and water park operator. Known for a familyfun atmosphere, Six Flags operates 39 parks in Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States. During their busy season, Six Flags employs up to 50,000 people globally.

Explosive Growth

Six Flags' visitors weren't the only ones on a thrill ride. Annual revenues were exceeding \$1 billion, new parks were popping up around the world, and increasing ticket sales via the Web, phone, and kiosk were soaring to record levels.

With the larger parks running a complex enterprise solution and the smaller parks running diverse smaller financial packages, the financial consolidation for these incompatible systems meant a flurry of faxes being sent across the globe.

Six Flags needed to consolidate its many different general ledger systems. The management team realized it was time to implement a centralized business management solution that would enable all 39 park management teams across the globe to collectively work together. A multi-national effort, with local support and customization, was at the core of an equation that would help Six Flags continue with their exhilarating growth.

Of all the expectations Six Flags set for a new business solution, global reporting was one of the most crucial requirements. In the past, Six Flags struggled to make various systems work together, and corporate reporting included hours of data uploads and manual consolidations for distribution to managers around the globe. As a result, decisions were being delayed, and for a multi-national corporation, this was unacceptable.

Solution

The Move to Microsoft Business Solutions

Although some consultants suggested that only a tier-one or extremely complex, high-end solution would be able to meet their growing demands, Six Flags selected Microsoft® Business Solutions–Great Plains® as the business management solution to interconnect their global business. According to Joe von Bose, Six Flags Corporate Manager of Accounting Operations, “Cost was important, and the system had to be simple to learn, yet have extensive functionality to meet our global requirements.”

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

Six Flags’ solution at the park level had to be supported in the local language, with adherence to local tax codes and local currency computations. Management at the corporate headquarters needed global reporting capabilities. To handle this challenging implementation, Six Flags needed a coordinated international effort. The slogan “Thinking globally, acting locally” became the mission statement for the implementation.

A Value-Add Partner

Six Flags selected Microsoft Business Solutions reselling partner

Collins Computing to design their new solution. “Collins Computing was able to design and configure our implementation in a way that met our goals within the desired timeline, all while addressing issues of multiple languages, currencies and localization,” von Bose says. “Collins Computing was a real partner during the implementation phase, offering value-added service that has sealed our relationship for the long-term.”

The Power of Microsoft SQL Server

Centralized on ten Citrix servers, Microsoft Business Solutions operates on Microsoft SQL Server™, which enables all park management teams across the globe to work collectively while providing scalability to support the high transaction volume generated by the various parks. For example, integrated inventory planning and purchasing capabilities enable Six Flags to lower inventory overhead. This allows various parks around the world to swap the high-cost parts needed to keep the complex park rides running smoothly.

Leveraging the Microsoft Business Solutions presence in more than 130 countries, **Collins Computing** established local partner networks and policies that would get Six Flags up and running in just two months. “We know that service is one of the most important factors in the success of any implementation,” says Randy Forkner, President of Collins Computing. “We managed the project closely to ensure that all parks received high quality implementation, training, and support services.”

Benefits

Cost Savings from Purchasing and Inventory Planning

With one central, enterprise-level solution, purchasing and inventory planning can now be implemented in an integrated, shared environment. This enables Six Flags to lower inventory overhead by providing various parks around the world the opportunity to “swap” high-cost parts needed to keep the complex park rides running smoothly.

Increased Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is also on the rise with a better stream of supplies hitting the stands on demand, rather than on a scheduled basis.

The Speed and Power of Microsoft SQL Server

Six Flags executives are extremely pleased with the dependability and speed afforded by Microsoft Business Solutions running on the powerful Microsoft SQL Server. "In one week alone, our Magic Mountain park generated more than 3,300 journal entries in [Microsoft Business Solutions]. When you multiply that number across 38 additional parks, 52 weeks a year, you get a clear picture of what [Microsoft Business Solutions] can and must handle," von Bose says.

Ease of Operation

"[Microsoft Business Solutions] is simply easier to maintain and operate, which has allowed us to distribute valuable technical resources to other parts of the company," von Bose says. "And, it's much less complex to learn. We are now able to train users on the

entire system in five days. On our past system, it took five days just for general ledger training alone."

Improved Processes

Sharing a common system, executives around the globe can now run and create their own reports using industry-standard reporting tools. Users are able to drill down from any amount within the system to gather greater detail, a feature that was not available in Six Flags' previous systems. Employees are spending less time on the tedious project of consolidating data and manually creating reports, providing for improved employee morale.

Microsoft Business Solutions is increasing efficiency in many areas of the business, including training and technical support. IT staffing for financial systems at Six Flags corporate headquarters was reduced from 12 to 5 full-time employees. "[Microsoft Business Solutions] has given us our weekends back. We are saving at least 60 hours per month by eliminating the countless hours expended on report consolidation, printing, and distribution, which means not only a cost savings to our company, but also a better work environment for employees," Von Bose says.



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