



# THRIVING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

## 10 Inspiring P2P Stories



**International Association of  
Microsoft Channel Partners**



## Partnership as a Cornerstone of a Successful Business Strategy

In today's business environment – where customers' demands are increasing and time to respond is shrinking – organizations realize that, in order to develop unique offerings and provide new skill sets, they need to embrace the concept of partnership. From the largest multinational corporations, such as Microsoft, to the SMB segment, partnerships have become a critical element of business strategy.

At last year's Executive Partner Summit (EPS) in Cannes, Gavriella Schuster talked about the need to focus on points of alignment among companies, rather than areas where they compete.

*"Every time we come together with our partners for a solution, we open a new socket that creates value for everyone... When you break it down, partnership is a combination of trust and empathy, mixed with an exchange of value."*

– Gavriella Schuster, Microsoft's Corporate Vice President, Commercial Partner Channels & Programs

I couldn't agree more.

IAMCP has the concept of partnership firmly embedded in its core.

One of our ongoing efforts in encouraging partners to work together is our annual competition for best P2P customer cases, which honors MS partners that go above and beyond in providing innovative IT services and products to their customers by leveraging partnerships.

In 2017, we had 60 entries coming from five regions around the world.

This eBook collects ten winning stories that showcase the many benefits of alliances between Microsoft partners.

Through these case studies you will learn how coming together helped partners to obtain fresh ideas and opinions, grow knowledge and expertise, fill their skill gaps, break into untapped markets, discover new opportunities, and co-create new value for the customers.

I hope you'll enjoy the read and that in these stories you will find inspiration to forge new business friendships and grow together with your partners.

Gail Mercer-MacKay  
Awards Chair, IAMCP International







## TWO MICROSOFT PARTNERS AND ONE POWER BI SOLUTION IN A “MILLION-DOLLAR” BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION



It may come as a surprise that, in the digital era, sales of appointment books and paper planners are on the rise! According to research company NDP Group, paper planner sales increased by 10 percent from 2015 to 2016, while calendars increased by eight percent over the same time period. This trend continued recent years, especially on the Japanese and Chinese markets, as well as among Millennials in the Western world. “The Digital Age Kids” apparently nurture the pen-and-paper planner culture, despite the variety of modern devices they use every day.

**Blue Sky The Color of Imagination LLC** is a successful planner and calendar reseller from United States, offering their products mostly through Amazon, Walmart and Target, as well as other major online and offline retailers. They felt the paper planner popularity increase, however, time-consuming manual processes in data management hindered the company’s growth and productivity.

### The Manual Frustration

Managing different sales figures and consumer information used to be a daily frustration for Blue Sky employees: each large retailer had a different portal and data had to be downloaded manually.

Also, every retailer names its data differently, so Blue Sky had to consolidate this information using Microsoft Access. Not only was that an additional manual process,

but it was also very limiting, as they could upload and report on very small portions of data (maximum two gigabytes).

If they wanted to go back to historical data and compare it against current information, that was another time-consuming, manual process, plus they didn’t have any insights into real-time data.

*“It took them weeks to gather information, which is why the data was stale by the time they were looking at it,” said Weaver, adding, “It was very difficult to do any type of cost and inventory projections, or get an idea of trends in the marketplace.”*

Without quality data insights and business projections, Blue Sky’s growth was stalled.

### “Power(ed) BI” Partnership

IT Responsive was Blue Sky’s managed service provider for over a decade and, therefore, their first partner of choice for the new technological challenge.

*“We understood the problem and were able to talk to a couple of different partners to find the right solution to solve their problem. We decided to partner up with Adeptek Consulting, which had done a lot of business for large companies such as Port of Los Angeles and had developed some really interesting Power BI solutions that were very similar to what Blue Sky was looking for,” said Weaver.*

*“Thanks to a Microsoft Power BI solution developed in a partnership between IT Responsive and Adeptek Consulting, Blue Sky has significantly grown in 2017. Due to annual savings of \$2.4 Million and highly effective data management, they could allocate their resources into brand promotion and focus on their own e-Commerce business, almost doubling their revenue in just one year.”*

*- Chance Weaver,  
President of IT Responsive.*



Microsoft Power BI was the most reasonable solution because Blue Sky was already using Microsoft Office 365. However, they were also using Sage ERP system from which they were exporting all of the data into a SQL database for creating reports.

## Digitalized Data on a Colorful Dashboard

Through Power BI, the new solution was able to capture all information into a centralized database, change the naming convention for easier reporting and include the historical data.

The company is using a Microsoft Azure SQL database as the central repository for all of the data, where the process of gathering information into the system is now completely automated.

Now, Blue Sky employees can see their old and new data on a dashboard, also containing newest trends, from which they can create very accurate trend and order projections or estimate inventory requirements.

### The Millions: Saving a Few and Earning a Dozen!

- One of the biggest wins of the new solution is the fact that **it saved the company about 2.4 million on an annual basis!** The savings were made in projecting inventory requirements and orders, which used to swirl with mistakes in the previous, manual practice.
- An even bigger “wow-effect” of the solution was an **increased ROI by almost 50 percent** – their profits grew from \$18 Million to \$30 Million over a period of only one year!
- What’s also interesting about Blue Sky is that it invested the saved amounts back into technology and the new solution! Because they were thrilled with how it improved their projections, they wanted to implement the same system into other parts of their busi-

ness, such as project management, which also had a challenging data management process. To gather all the information, rename everything, put it into the Access database, crunch the numbers, and create a small report on maybe one month of information, the previous process would take them about 116 hours. Now it is all automated and the reports come out with the click of a button.

- The new solution also enabled Blue Sky to **reallocate people** that used to work inside the “reporting team” into more useful positions, such as design, purchasing, and inventory teams. Now they have only one employee assigned for reports, who understands Power BI well and creates extra dashboards for everyone.

*“The Blue Sky team attributes a large portion of their growth to the ability to have access to business critical data that they didn’t have before. It’s really exciting to see some of the things that have changed and some of the things that we can do with SQL and Power BI: it’s amazing!” Weaver said.*

IT Responsive and Adeptek also count another type of win. They learned how important it is to keep a close relationship with their partner, where they nurtured fantastic communication and alignment of their project and implementation goals, while helping each other to ensure the best client experience.



*“Due to our partnership, we have created referral programs and helped our partners to develop recurring revenue opportunities from a solution that was traditionally a one-off project,” Weaver concluded.*



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