



Overview

Industry

Training Provider

Business Situation

Virtual College has evolved its deployment of Dynamics 365 to connect its core processes across sales, servicing and marketing, to create a single source of truth.

Highlights

- Expanded Dynamics adoption and usage to encompass sales, marketing, ecommerce and content teams
- Successful integrations including Sitecore and Sage 50, enabling seamless and consistent customer journeys across all channels
- Unified product management data
- How Virtual College was able to react quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic, and achieve business as usual with Dynamics 365 with ClickDimensions
- Working with a Managed Service team who understand their Dynamics system and their vision for the future

Virtual College creates digital training solutions ranging from ready to go courses to large scale training transformation programmes, underpinned by learning technology and real-world training expertise.

We talked to Helen Alexander (Dynamics Product Owner) about the progress that Virtual College has made with Microsoft Dynamics 365, and how Preact (now part of ANS Group) has supported their business.

How does Dynamics 365 work for Virtual College?

Dynamics has come a long way in its perception and usage within Virtual College.

Since we first made the transition to Dynamics in 2017, we've taken great strides to fully embed it within the business - maximising its value and driving engagement. At first we adopted it as a back-end system that was used predominantly by our offline sales and support teams, whereas over the past 18 months we've extended its usage and its capabilities to establish it as a key part of our architecture, also used by our ecommerce, marketing and content teams.

Within Virtual College today, Dynamics 365 is seen as an adaptable product that gives us insight into our course management, product management, marketing automation, customer support and sales, which are all connected to the system. We have embarked on an ambitious integrated learning platform strategy and Dynamics 365 is a pivotal part of this.

What benefits from Dynamics 365 have you seen?

Previously, Dynamics was only handling workflows for our offline sales team. This created a gap in intelligence because much of our business is online, but we didn't have visibility of this activity in Dynamics. This also caused some inconsistency in customer experiences as our processes weren't aligned across these channels.

With Preact's help, we've completed an integration project which has resulted in Dynamics becoming our single source of truth for product information management. This has included connecting our Sitecore content management system with Dynamics which means our course metadata, including price changes, are kept in sync. We can even choose to notify the relevant people when changes are made. Online order data is also fed into Dynamics, giving us visibility, product reporting and analysis alongside offline sales entries.



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Helen Alexander
Dynamics Product Owner
Virtual College

Further integration with our Sage 50 accounts system pushes invoice details into Dynamics which has saved time by removing manual steps. This has automated our invoice delivery for both online and offline channels.

Our core objective has been to streamline these processes and unify data, irrespective of channel. It is early days, but we have quickly seen the benefits as we no longer have to update data in two places across our 450 off-the-shelf courses. Not only is this saving time as less effort is required, it has removed inconsistency and improved trust in our data with a single source of truth.

We've been on a journey to take Dynamics from being a somewhat underused and unappreciated system, to the stage we're at now – where our teams are much more knowledgeable about what Dynamics can do and we're using it to connect the dots between functions and join up collaborative processes. Across Virtual College, we regard Dynamics 365, Power Apps and the Power Platform as highly versatile technology that is becoming strongly embedded across the business.

How has this improved reporting?

There is still a lot more to come, but we've immediately saved time on our product reporting as everything is now coming through Dynamics 365.

This is giving us a richer visibility of our customer universe with a solid foundation of clean, consistent data that we'll be using to build out our reporting capability. Power BI is already part of this, and these visualisations are helping us think about our data in new ways.

In what ways did Dynamics 365 help Virtual College react to the challenges of Covid-19?

Dynamics has helped us work through this with minimal disruption. During this time, we've been able to achieve business as usual, run campaigns and switch focus very quickly.

ClickDimensions is another key component within our Dynamics system. It has enabled us to quickly send emergency communications to our customers about our updated ways of working at the start of the pandemic. It was also crucial in allowing us to quickly go to market with a series of free courses including infection control.

More widely, ClickDimensions is helping us directly engage learners through their learning paths and maintain cross channel consistency. Its tools are helping us understand behaviours and patterns, design relevant messages off the back of this data and extend our communications.



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Helen Alexander
Dynamics Product Owner
Virtual College

For more information

To find out more about our Microsoft Dynamics 365 services please call 0800 381 1000 or +44(0)1628 661 810

Or, visit www.preact.co.uk

What benefits has Virtual College seen from Preact's Managed Service?

Our managed service has given us consistent touchpoints with members of the Preact team who understand our system and the direction we want to take. We've built a strong relationship with their team and benefited from their advice on what is possible, the best approach to take, and how to get more from the system.

We have what we consider to be a relatively complex system. Many of Preact's support team know our setup well and are able to react quickly. Our support requirements have been fairly light, due to having a stable and well-built system, but they have always been responsive with knowledgeable first line support when needed. This is backed up by a high level of expertise in its build team.

I get the sense that Preact genuinely cares about their customers. Our relationship has strengthened during the last 18 months which is a credit to our account manager and technical account manager.

Preact has supported us through a very ambitious development of Dynamics, from which we've seen real success and greater adoption. By coupling the core Dynamics functionality with additional products like ClickDimensions, we've built what I often describe as a 'Rolls Royce' of a CRM and marketing automation system with very high capabilities. Our current focus is to ensure that we are fully utilising these tools to engage Virtual College customers with experiences that enrich and advance their digital vocational learning – and hopefully achieve our aim of inspiring learning for all!

We are grateful to Helen for sharing her experiences. To learn more about Virtual College, its online course, bespoke eLearning and learning management systems, visit <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk>.