

A dark blue rounded rectangular badge with the text "Case Story" in white, sans-serif font.

Case Story



VariQuest for the Holy Grail of Cloud Connectivity

“ I’ve been part of at least six ERP implementations over 20 years. From top to bottom this was the best experience, and Rapidi was a big part of this.”

Tom Hallbeck, Director of Operations

Varitronics LLC is a Minnesota-based company that does business as “VariQuest Visual Learning Tools”. A major US wholesaler of specialized printers to schools, including wide-body, 3-D and label printers, along with related equipment like laminators and die cutters, it distributes products through a network of strategically located dealers as well as directly to customers.

A long-time Salesforce customer, in 2018 they transitioned their ERP system from a Salesforce-based ERP known as Ascent, to the cloud-based version of Microsoft Dynamics ERP known as Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, connected with Rapidi, going live as scheduled on January 2, 2019.



Ascending to the cloud

According to Tom Hallbeck, Director of Operations, Varitronics has been a user of cloud-based CRM Salesforce since the early 2000s when the company was part of the Brady Corporation. After becoming independent in 2012, they saw no reason to change their CRM, as Salesforce met many of the needs of their sales and management teams...but not all. They could no longer use the ERP solution that was on-premises at their former owner, so they tried to meet their internal financial, inventory and distribution requirements with a Salesforce-based ERP named Ascent, but they were never completely satisfied. Once they discovered that NAV was available in a Cloud version, they decided that it was time for a change.

As Hallbeck says, “Being in the cloud was important for our ERP as well as our CRM. Salesforce is the top of the line CRM, and Microsoft now provides the top of the line cloud-based ERP with Dynamics 365 Business Central.”

Rapidi – The Missing Link

Varitronics ran into the same issue as many other companies that use both a CRM and ERP – the two systems don't talk to each other, forcing manual data entry in two places, and lots of importing and exporting of data, which not only wastes time, but creates innumerable opportunities for error. This is where Rapidi steps forwards and minds the gap. It all started, according to Hallbeck, when, "Rapidi was recommended by Stoneridge Software, our implementation partner. Rapidi made a good first impression on us, and we felt comfortable with what they were offering us. We did look at another solution, but it was an easy decision to go with Rapidi and their Rapidi data integration solution."

Varitronics' Salesforce implementation had been heavily customized, partly because of their previous ERP, but Hallbeck did not think that was a good thing, "We actually wanted a fairly vanilla ERP implementation, and that's what we ended up with. Well, with the exception of the printer serial numbers that are generated in the ERP, and that require some customization in Salesforce as well."

In their implementation, Accounts are added and updated in Salesforce, and synchronized by Rapidi into their Dynamics 365 Business Central ERP, with only credit limits and credit holds going in the other direction. On the other hand all the details about products are entered in Business Central with Rapidi transferring new and updated product information over to Salesforce.

"In the end," Hallbeck can report, "I don't think our implementation was far out of the norm. Using Salesforce only for its intended purpose as a CRM means that we don't have nearly as much customization as before. Which is a good thing."



Smooth Sailing

Hallbeck has twenty years of experience with ERP implementations, “They are not for the faint of heart, and can be really challenging. Even 3, 6 or 9 months after the system is turned up it still might not be where it should be. I think this was my seventh ERP implementation, and from top to bottom it was the best. Rapidi was a big part of this.”



Hallbeck is full of praise for the Rapidi consultants as much as for the product, “The Rapidi consultant was always there for us, and often worked early or late to accommodate our needs in a different time zone. My team member who worked closely with the consultant was also extremely appreciative.”

“The best part,” remembers Hallbeck, “was that when we went live on January 2nd we didn’t find any ‘gotchas’, we just needed a few tweaks. It’s been three months now and the system hasn’t been down even once. The connections are working exactly like Rapidi promised us they would.”


Afterthoughts

Hallbeck reports that, now implementation is complete, “Our management team benefits the most. Before, we had a hard time with our previous ERP system trying to get really good sales-person and customer sales reporting. We knew that Salesforce would hold some information, and our Business Central would have other. But because they are connected so smoothly we can produce reports without having to worry where the data originates.”

User adoption was not a problem either. “Change is always difficult, even when it’s for a good reason,” notes Hallbeck, “so we had many meetings in advance with our user group to prepare them as best we could. We are continuing to meet with them, and the atmosphere is positive. I think it’s going to get better and better in the future, as our users take advantage of more and more of the information that is now available to them.”

“The best thing about Rapidi, “ says Hallbeck, “is that it is very simple – it just works. And when we need help or advice, the Rapidi consultants are always there for us. They not only know their own product, they are experts on both Salesforce and Business Central as well. And that is really important.”

Even Varitronics’ dealer network has been able to benefit from the implementation. Hallbeck has also had positive feedback from them, “They are finding that it is much easier to enter orders, and that’s obviously really good for us.”



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Advice for others

Hallbeck does not hesitate to recommend Rapidi to others, “Anyone who asks me, who has similar needs, I will tell them to check out Rapidi”. Many Rapidi customers start with an ERP and then implement Salesforce later, so he has some advice for those who are going in the opposite direction, like him, and implementing a new ERP with an existing Salesforce implementation, “Give yourself enough time! ERP implementations can be very difficult. We gave ourselves 9 months, just to be sure that we had a good system on Day 1. And we did.”



About Varitronics and VariQuest

Varitronics, LLC provides education technology solutions that help improve academic progress and classroom engagement of all learners. Varitronics' customer base includes more than 30,000 early childhood centers, elementary schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary institutions throughout North America. Varitronics' product suite, the VariQuest® Visual Learning Tools allow students and teachers the ability to quickly and easily create visual supports that help differentiate instruction, create school uniformity and engage students. Varitronics, LLC is a privately held company, headquartered in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.

Find out more about the company at www.variquest.com



About RAPIDI

Data integration doesn't have to be confusing or complicated. It can be simple and stress-free. At RAPIDI, we are your go-to data integration experts with over 20 years of experience. We apply it to ensure your data integration project runs smoothly. RAPIDI uses cutting-edge technology to provide data integration solutions that are fast yet flexible, simple, robust and secure. We have perfected our blend of human and technical skills to provide you with an unrivalled committed, caring and personal customer service experience. We believe these things are just as important as the technology we use so let us take the stress out of your data integration. RAPIDI is a privately-owned company with offices in Andorra, France, Spain & Macedonia.

Learn more about RAPIDI at www.rapidionline.com

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