



Introduction

Microsoft is bringing the mainstream support for Dynamics AX 2009, 2012 RTM and 2012 R2 to an End. All End-of-Life (EoL) announcements are followed by an uncertainty about the impacts and effects this might have on businesses. In respect for this Microsoft has extended the support for Dynamics AX 2009 to give users more time to upgrade.

This whitepaper addresses the challenges and risks associated with running a business-critical system on an unsupported software product. In addition, it discusses how businesses can benefit from upgrading to a new and fully supported release now.

VERSION	MAINSTREAM SUPPORT	EXTENDED SUPPORT END
Dynamics AX 2009	October 2018	2021
Dynamics AX 2012 RTM	October 2018	2021
Dynamics AX 2012 R2	October 2018	2021
Dynamics AX 2012 R3	2021	2023

GUIDE OUTLINE

1. Risks of Running Unsupported ERP Software
2. Opportunities for Business Efficiencies
3. Upgrade Options

WHITE
PAPER



SECTION 1

Risks of Running Unsupported ERP Software

From October 2018 Microsoft will stop issuing new fixes and changes to Dynamics AX 2009, 2012 RTM and 2012 R2. Some might be inclined to assume that there is very little risk associated with a system which was running successfully for several years, even if it is no longer supported. After all, surely all bugs have been found by now? So what could possibly go wrong? There are however major risks involved and sadly, they are very real.

Change, as we all know, is inevitable. Consider recent changes to tax rules as well as the fact that electronic trading and banking protocols are constantly evolving. Governments are continually pushing companies towards electronic filing and reporting and customers demand more efficient supply chains using automation to reduce costs. All these changes of regulations, functionality and needs have a direct impact on your business-critical software products. As an example: The immediate challenges of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance requires significant changes to ERP systems.

Continued operation of Dynamics AX will make it very difficult if not impossible to adhere to these external changes and ultimately this may result in businesses breaching rules and disrupting operations. To comply with the demands will require extensive adjustment outside the system, thus undermining the benefits of an integrated ERP.

Businesses evolve as the demands of the markets change and ERP systems should equally evolve to support these changes. If not, the ERP system no longer supports the business processes, and hence the purpose of an integrated ERP is at stake. To protect the ERP investment, the system needs to keep pace with the business requirements and changes, hence it is necessary to adopt, adjust and use new features. Hardware, database software, office productivity systems, business intelligence tools and cloud computing have all evolved hugely but the ability to take advantage of these innovations is severely hampered when using unsupported ERP software that relies on the technology and functionality of the past.

However, any upgrade shouldn't be taken lightly – there is work to do with testing and retraining users. Planning well ahead before the EoL takes effect, allows ample time to execute properly and avoid the issues identified above.



SECTION 2

Opportunities for Business Efficiencies

There have been four significant releases since Dynamics AX 2009 and 2012 were first introduced, bringing thousands of product improvements and hence the potential for further streamlining of business processes.

For example, these releases enable:

- » Flexible financial reporting and analysis with unlimited financial dimensions
- » Simplified master data management and reporting due to shared data such as the chart of account, financial periods, exchange rates, products and the global address book
- » Scheduling of people onto projects, leveraging the HR modules competency framework
- » Better scheduling of manufacturing
- » Wider use of workflows and policies for approvals.

In many cases, upgrading to the latest version eliminates the need for customisations and 3rd party products, potentially saving thousands of pounds per year in maintenance costs. In addition, this ensure operating a standard product supported by one partner in a more cost effective manner.

Upgrading to the latest version of Dynamics also offers the opportunity to re-evaluate decisions that were made on the initial implementation. This allows businesses to assess whether they are still offering the benefits required and to adopt or make changes if necessary. It also presents the perfect opportunity for cleansing existing data and thus to enhance data quality.



SECTION 3

Upgrade Options

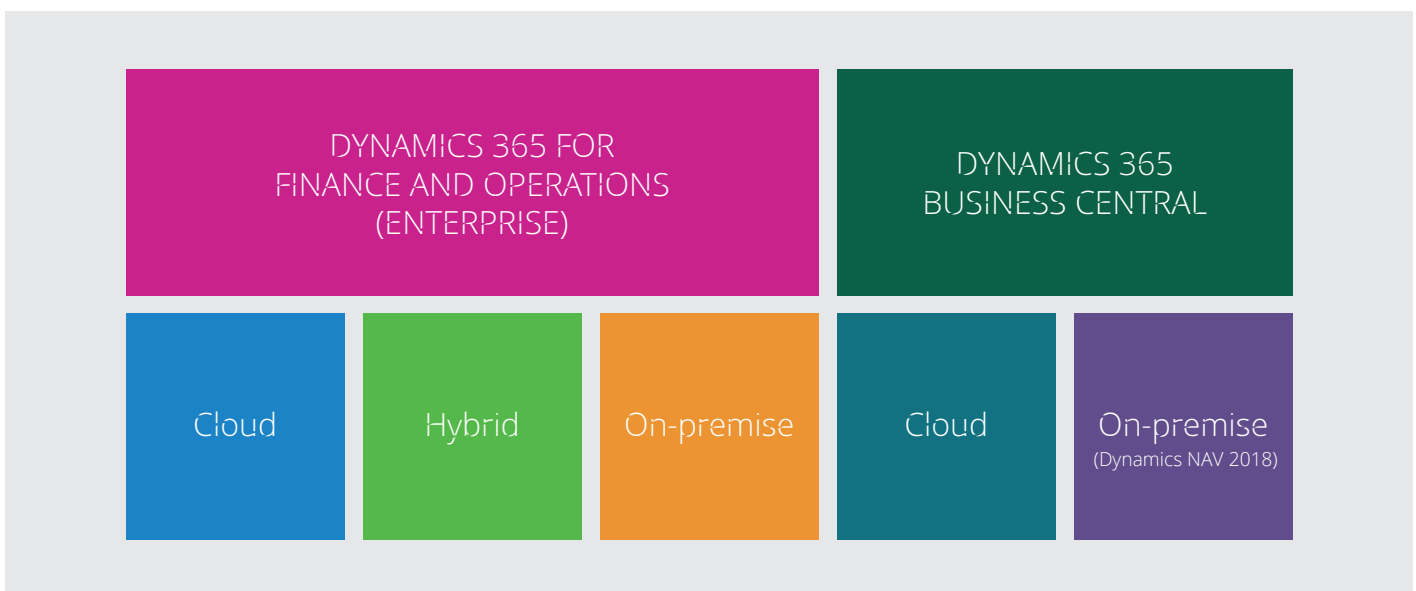
Since Microsoft announced that they will also remove AX2012 R3 from their price lists in summer 2017, the decision-making process has become slightly easier.

Microsoft offer two ERP solutions that would be suitable upgrade options for Dynamics AX users. Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations and Dynamics 365 Business Central.

Dynamics 365 for Finance and Operations is the direct descendant of Dynamics AX and is the logical upgrade path for businesses that use most of the Dynamics AX functionality. For smaller businesses, or businesses that are finding they aren't using everything the system has to offer there is Dynamics 365 Business Central, which is based on Dynamics NAV architecture.

The cloud provides benefits such as its evergreen nature (ensuring that businesses never miss an update), constant lower predictable costs, shorter deployment times and reduced development and test costs. Access to Power BI, Microsoft's class leading business intelligence tool, is another reason to consider to moving to the cloud ERP solution.

On-premise and hybrid options both offer their own unique benefits and our approach is to agnostically advise you on the most effective option available and to define an upgrade path, based on a proven methodology, that accounts for your organisation's unique requirements.





About Incremental Group

Incremental Group is working with organisations currently using Dynamics AX to assess the risk to their business of remaining on an unsupported version of AX and the business benefits to be derived from upgrading.

This involves one of our highly experienced AX consultants conducting an Upgrade Readiness Assessment (taking into account customisations and 3rd party modules), highlighting the risks and opportunities for businesses and demonstrating later versions to showcase what benefits can be delivered.

Finally, Incremental Group will objectively prepare a report with a recommendation on the best option for the organisation with an implementation plan to allow a thorough consideration of the next steps.