Specializing in geotechnical construction, Keller Foundations is the North American subsidiary of U.K.–based Keller Group PLC. Keller Foundations includes Hayward Baker, Case Foundation Company, McKinney Drilling Company, Anderson Drilling, HJ Foundation Company, Keller Canada, and Suncoast Post-Tension.

Results
• Enforcement of standard operating procedures
• Improve business insight and reporting
• Streamline business processes
• Achieve economies of scale on subsidiary rollouts
• Enable ongoing growth

Industry
Construction

Country or Region
United States and Canada

Customer Size
Around 4,500 employees

Number of Users
1,000 employees

Connect with Keller Foundations

www.kellerfoundations.com

Construction Company Supports End-to-End Processes, Growth with ERP

"We saw Microsoft Dynamics AX as the solution that would take us to the next level as a business. It provided the range of modules we needed, so we wouldn't have to keep building point solutions, while also offering the flexibility to meet our industry requirements."

Brian Seymour, CIO, Keller Foundations

From tunneling support to ground water control, the services of geotechnical construction companies like Keller Foundations lay the critical groundwork for major construction projects worldwide.

Now comprising six companies and generating around U.S.$1 billion a year in revenue, Keller Foundations—just 14 years back—comprised only two companies and generated around $120 million a year in revenue.

When it was a much smaller company with fewer business entities, Keller Foundations could rely on its construction accounting solution, CMS from Computer Guidance Corporation. But with much of its growth coming through acquisition, the company soon found itself with multiple accounting packages and reporting systems, requiring duplication of effort and tedious consolidation and reconciliation to analyze finances at the corporate level.

Adding to this complexity, Keller Foundations had developed a number of point solutions over the years to tackle various line-of-business needs, such as human resources (HR), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and customer relationship management (CRM), which could not be handled by its existing system.

"Following acquisitions and assimilations, we were at a point where we could not, with our existing technology, support our current organization or any future growth," says Brian Seymour, CIO for Keller Foundations. "Converting one of our newest acquisitions to the system was such a challenge that we decided *not* to convert the next acquisition. We were heading in a direction where we were going to end up with a number of financial packages."

At this critical point, Seymour notes, "We brought in outside consulting to review our existing IT infrastructure, and discovered that we needed to very seriously begin looking at deploying an ERP system to support our

Microsoft Dynamics

growing organization. It was no longer about providing a corporate accounting package, but providing tools for all the operations, which had been neglected for quite some time."

Choosing Microsoft Dynamics AX

Keller Foundations began to evaluate leading construction-oriented ERP packages, including those from CMiC, Viewpoint Construction, and Penta. The company also looked at the latest version of CMS. These smaller, construction-focused packages posed a problem, however. Explains Seymour, "Although we certainly had to fulfill the requirements of a construction business, our strategic goals were about meeting the needs of a complex enterprise, while providing a catalyst for organizational change through standard operating procedures enabled and enforced by the ERP."

Seymour also notes that as a significant portion of the Keller Group, he had concerns with putting a billion-dollar-a-year business in the hands of companies that were significantly smaller in comparison. Many of the applications that were strictly construction-focused offered few options to extend the functionality of the solution inherently. At the same time, Keller Foundations wanted to provide tools for all of its operations, not just accounting.

To support its myriad business needs, Keller Foundations then looked at Microsoft Dynamics AX on the suggestion of its parent company, which had reported success with other Microsoft Dynamics products in the UK and Australia. "We saw Microsoft Dynamics AX as the solution that would take us to the next level as a business," says Seymour. "It provided the range of modules we needed, so we wouldn't have to keep building point solutions, while also offering the flexibility to meet our industry requirements."

Deploying Microsoft Dynamics AX

Working with its Microsoft partner, and after developing core functional requirements across all areas and business units, Keller Foundations underwent an accelerated, six-month deployment of Microsoft Dynamics AX. The company went live with all aspects of the system at the start of 2011, and continued to tailor the system over the course of the following year to refine functions and improve efficiencies.

Supporting Accounting and Operations

With Microsoft Dynamics AX in place, Keller Foundations now supports the following key business functions, among others:

- **Project management and financial reporting.** Keller Foundations developed a project management dashboard that enables project managers to view all their projects and project costs, and then drill down into those costs to the individual invoice, or to the laborer and all their hours, or even to the equipment involved. Drawing on this information, the company can also perform weekly reporting on percent completion based on units of production. With all information

Brian Seymour
CIO

As assistant controller and then controller of Hayward Baker, a part of Keller Group, Brian Seymour helped lead the implementation of the company's construction accounting system.

Fourteen years later, as CIO of Keller Foundations, Seymour led the deployment of Microsoft Dynamics AX at the company. With the initial deployment taking only six months, Microsoft Dynamics AX now spans two of the company's largest subsidiaries, comprising over 60% of the total operation.

Connect with Brian Seymour

Microsoft

2

in one system, the company can report on finances with ease, whether for internal use or for tax purposes or according to U.S. or U.K. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

- **HR and payroll.** Bringing its HR functions into Microsoft Dynamics AX from disparate applications reduced redundant data entry and the inherent possibility of errors. Keller also tailored the payroll capabilities to meet the requirements of each state jurisdiction as well as to account for the differences in rules for union and non-union employees. These changes alone will save Keller significant dollars by ensuring the accuracy of payments that were previously made through manual calculations, and by avoiding fines that resulted from mispayments to required entities.

- **CRM.** Keller Foundations rebuilt their existing internally developed CRM capabilities by using the CRM module in Microsoft Dynamics AX and will soon be using it to manage marketing campaigns. This not only ensures the accuracy of data but also allows staff to work in one system throughout all phases of a project life cycle.

- **Time-keeping.** Keller Foundations staff in the field record their time in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. When they connect to the Internet, time-keeping information is uploaded to Microsoft Dynamics AX through Atlas, from Globe Software, which enables integration between Microsoft Dynamics AX and Microsoft Office, eliminating duplicate data entry.

- **Resource handling** Microsoft Dynamics AX currently tracks as many as 18,000 pieces of equipment, which can now be paid for by associating them directly to projects. The integrated resource management module ensures that highly specialized equipment can be used efficiently across all companies.

- **Purchasing.** When project managers kick off a new project and assign items to that project, they now initiate a workflow that sends the request for those items on to the next person for approval based on a defined hierarchy and approval limits. After they are approved, items are posted to inventory as received, and costs are recognized as used on the project.

Benefits

With Microsoft Dynamics AX, Keller Foundations has the broad capabilities it needs to support a multi-company enterprise, while still having the specificity of a solution tailored to its industry. Since standardizing on Microsoft Dynamics AX, the company has improved business insight and significantly streamlined reporting. Keller Foundations has also used its ERP deployment as an opportunity to streamline a range of business processes, and has even achieved economies of scale in the deployment process itself as it brings more of its subsidiaries into the system and continues to grow.

Microsoft

Improve Business Insight and Reporting

Having all financial and operational data in Microsoft Dynamics AX has led to significant improvements in business visibility while greatly easing reporting. Looking back on the deployment, Seymour says, "Our interactive project recap launched directly from a project management dashboard was the capstone of the project. Before Microsoft Dynamics AX, project information was just numbers on a report. Now those numbers mean something. We can see in a great deal of detail what makes up a number, and now there's no excuse for not having it."

Streamline End-to-End Business Processes

By supporting its entire operation with a single solution, Keller Foundations has dramatically cut the need to rekey information while standardizing processes companywide. This has led to numerous improvements in accounting and corporate finance, as well as big changes in payroll, resource handling, HR, and all the other business functions the handled by the system.

The ability to continually tailor and configure Microsoft Dynamics AX has also boosted productivity. Says Seymour, "We can go as far as to make required fields that people forget to fill in turn red. And right there, that's the reason and power behind Microsoft Dynamics AX. Even a small change that saves 400 people 30 seconds a day has a major impact on the business."

Achieve Economies of Scale, Enable Growth

As Keller Foundations continues to bring its subsidiaries onto Microsoft Dynamics AX, it has found significant economies of scale in deployment times. Although the initial deployment took six months to complete and then a year to tailor, the deployment time for subsequent companies has been considerably shorter after individual business units gathered their business requirements. Says Seymour, "From a purely IT perspective, it's about a week of work to configure a new business in Microsoft Dynamics. After the business users undergo training, they're able to start cutting checks in week one."

Now looking to future growth, Seymour adds, "We really want Keller Foundations to be an efficient operation that is supported for the long term. Microsoft Dynamics AX gives us the ability to scale out, support our operations, and instill the discipline we need to do that."

Next Steps

- Connect with Microsoft Dynamics
- Become a Dynamic Business
- Read about other global construction companies that have grown and thrived on Microsoft Dynamics AX

Microsoft