

Power Platform Insights

February 2024

An Executive Blueprint for Low-code Transformation in 2024

Also in this issue: A winter Wave 1 warm-up for solution makers!



Building Digital Resilience: A Power Platform Journey in 2024



A Construction Company's Power Platform Journey

This month, we are taking a closer look at Microsoft Power Platform to automate manual processes and increase efficiency for your enterprise by telling the story through the lens of the construction industry. Chapter by chapter, we illustrate how you can leverage Microsoft Power Platform to prioritize, iterate, and evaluate the effectiveness of your digital resilience strategy; reveal how Power Platform cuts through the time and effort spent on custom solutions; and detail how to successfully apply low-code technology to transform your business, no matter the industry.

While fictional, our story encapsulates challenges that resonate with almost everyone. If you are in the construction industry, check out our [construction web page](#). The [what we're seeing](#) section highlights a lot of interesting facts and figures — such as did you know **45 percent of large enterprises will use automation to drive workforce scheduling by 2025?**



Upcoming Event for Migrating Legacy RPA

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Top 10 Wave 1 2024 Takeaways for Power Platform Makers



by Matthew DeVaney

Matthew DeVaney recently highlighted his favorite new features announced in the Power Platform Wave 1 2024 release plan. Here's a closer look at each feature and its significance:



Save Canvas Apps as Human Readable YAML Files

You can now unpack the source code of a canvas app to a human-readable YAML format using a built-in feature of Power Apps Studio. We no longer need a special command line tool to do it. Viewing the source code directly makes it easier to debug and improves the ability to code storage in Git-based version control.



Makers Can Share Their Apps and Tables Easily

Sharing Power Apps will now be as simple as sharing a Word document, improving collaboration. While the details of this are not all public yet, the net result hopefully will be an easier way to share apps and control the access to app data without having to use the security role designer for simple apps.



Increase Productivity with Power Automate and Excel Desktop

Links Power Automate with Excel desktop to automate tasks, thereby increasing productivity.

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The Industry Backdrop

Challenges and Opportunities for Construction in 2024

The AEC industry is in a phase of technology-led growth, with increased emphasis on [efficiency](#) and [automation](#). Legacy manual processes are giving way to productivity enhancements through modern solutions. And in the dynamic environment of 2024, the industry continues to deal with some challenges that were born in 2020 — such as navigating a landscape shaped by extended project timelines and supply chain disruptions.

These challenges underscore the need for more agile operational models. Additionally, confronting a significant labor shortage and an aging workforce, the industry also faces an urgent need to embrace new skills. This includes building **digital literacy to become more resilient**.

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Define Sync Settings on Mobile Devices for Model-Driven Apps

Model-driven app users can control when their device will attempt an offline sync: Wifi only or Auto Sync. Currently the synchronization settings have to be managed by an administrator and cannot be done from mobile. By allowing sync settings to be modified on the mobile device it will give users more control over how much data is stored locally.



Power Apps Direct Calls to SQL Stored Procedures

Currently, the only way to call a stored procedure from an application is via a Power Automate flow. While this works, it can lead to a lag, and as such, many app developers build complex logic directly into the front end of the canvas app. By being able to call stored procedures directly from an app it will eliminate the lag and help developers of apps on SQL to offload complex logic (such as logic that triggers delegation errors).



Share System Views With A Security Role

People have wanted this feature for YEARS. With the move to model-driven apps a few years back, we got the ability to have almost everything be role based, except for views. This is a very welcome change, and will allow us to be more strategic about the number of views we build (and also avoid excessive personal views, which do not travel with solution files).

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Assessing the Digital Landscape

The Challenge: Manual Processes and Paper-Based Tasks

Reflecting these industry-wide shifts, our fictional construction company faces the daily challenge of keeping up with digitally driven competitors. However, their outdated manual processes and spreadsheet reliance make them siloed, slow, and inefficient.

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Use Power Platform Connectors in Power Automate for Desktop Actions

Power Automate (cloud) actions can now be used in Power Automate Desktop. This is what makes Power Automate the most powerful automation platform — the ability to do both desktop RPA and api based DPA through connectors; however, there is a “split personality” where the cloud flow is separate from the desktop flow. We are already seeing many cloud actions added to Power Automate desktop, and with the ability to use connectors from desktop, we will have a truly seamless experience (and this will simplify sharing of flows and flow performance).



Power FX Integration with Power Automate for Desktop

Power FX can now be used as a scripting language in Power Automate Desktop alongside the current options — PowerShell, Javascript, and Python. One hurdle that many new makers face is the expression logic is different between Power Apps and Power Automate, and even different in Power Automate Desktop. By bringing PowerFX to Power Automate desktop, it will provide consistency in expressions and formulas between the two and reduce time for Power App makers to become Power Automate experts.

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They want to move away from Excel to address the limitations of spreadsheets in handling complex data and processes. They also want to enhance their project management capabilities through integrated workflows and real-time analytics, crucial for the unpredictable nature of the current construction landscape.

The journey toward digital resilience started with a detailed assessment of the company's current processes. This analysis revealed a web of inefficiencies stemming from an overreliance on spreadsheets. Much like a house built on sand, the old manual system was unsustainable and bound to collapse eventually.

When deciding what to transform first, the company considered several factors. Common key performance indicators (KPIs) and financial metrics were crucial, but so were logistical challenges. They had to consider the team's availability to focus on the transformation amidst other priorities. Technical factors also came into play, such as dependencies on systems that would soon be replaced.

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Efficient Processing for Apps with Delegation in Dataverse

More Power Fx functions will be delegable when Dataverse is used as the datasource in canvas apps and custom pages. This will make it easier to retrieve large datasets and optimize queries for performance. Dataverse is already the most powerful data source in the Power Platform as it has fewer delegation limits, and the ability to use views for advanced filter logic. It's great to see additional logic become delegable.



Enhance Network Security with Connectors

This is a big one. Almost every enterprise customer we work with wants to use private endpoints for SQL and Azure Blob. However, the only approaches that have been supported to date are whitelisting IP addresses (which makes the private endpoint not so private) or using workarounds like dataflows. This is a very welcome change and makes Power Apps and Power Automate a better fit for highly secure organizations.

Each of these features represents a stride forward in making the Power Platform more user-friendly, secure, and efficient, which are essential aspects for modern business applications.

For more in-depth insights, you can read Matthew Devaney's post on LinkedIn [here](#).

Construction Journey...

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In this process, the company learned the importance of questioning assumptions. They asked, "Do we need this process at all?" By identifying baseline metrics for each process, they were better equipped to evaluate the success of their transformation later.

For a real-world customer story, read about Lee Company

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Some common KPIs used in construction include:

- 1. Schedule Performance Index (SPI):** This measures the efficiency of time utilization on the project. It's calculated by dividing the earned value by the planned value. An SPI of less than 1 indicates a schedule delay.
- 2. Safety Incident Rate:** This measures the number of safety incidents that occur during a specific period. A lower rate is better, as it indicates a safer construction environment.
- 3. Change Orders:** This measures the number of changes made to the project after the initial planning phase. A high number of change orders can indicate poor planning or unforeseen circumstances and can lead to increased costs and delays.
- 4. Quality Control:** This can include a variety of metrics, such as the number of defects identified, the time taken to rectify them, and the overall cost of rework. High quality control standards lead to fewer defects, less rework, and lower costs.
- 5. Employee Turnover Rate:** This measures the number of employees who leave the company during a specific period. A lower turnover rate can signify a more satisfied and efficient workforce.
- 6. Project Profitability:** This measures the financial profit realized at the end of a project, taking into account all costs and revenues. It gives a clear indication of the financial success of a project.

The Solution: Embracing Power Platform

Choosing Power Platform is a strategic response to these challenges, offering a path to speeding and streamlining operations. This approach addresses fragmented data and inconsistent workflows while scaling up to meet growing business demands.



To begin, the company undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of its processes, assessing them based on factors like costs, efficiency, and risk. This analysis helps in prioritizing areas for digital transformation.

They then embrace a minimum viable product (MVP) strategy. This ensures a phased implementation that focuses on addressing immediate needs first. The approach allows for quick wins and builds a foundation for further transformation.

The Outcome: A Structured, Secure, Scalable Solution

The Power Platform offers a modern automated and centralized project management solution that is secure, efficient, and scalable. Benefits include:

- ★ **Tackled the labor shortage** — The new solution addresses the skilled labor gap by allowing less technical developers to manage and develop apps and flows. The company can now do more without having to hire a large number of expensive developers, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.
- ★ **Increased sustainability and efficiency** — In an era where sustainability is increasingly crucial, the company can now use the platform's analytics capabilities to optimize resource usage and reduce waste, aligning with environmental objectives and regulatory requirements.
- ★ **Enhanced digitalization and integration** — The adoption of digital solutions is solidified, allowing the company to integrate tools like BIM to enhance collaboration and information sharing, which is vital in a data-driven decision-making environment.

A Model for Transformation

This fictional journey with the Power Platform offers valuable insights into a strategic, phased approach to digital transformation. It serves as a model for companies across various sectors and emphasizes the importance of aligning technology adoption with business goals and operational realities. This story is a testament to the resilience and potential for growth in an ever-evolving business environment.

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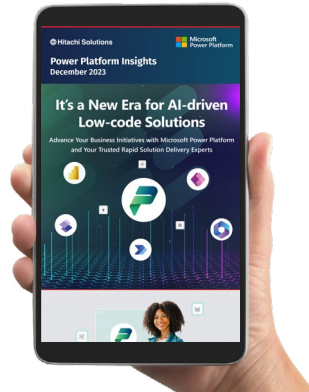
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Why Hitachi Solutions

The integration of RPA into AI business initiatives is a significant driving force for many companies this year. RPA's potential to increase process efficiency, enhance customer service, provide valuable business insights, and offer scalability makes it an essential tool for any business striving to stay competitive in the age of AI. Anything sound interesting? If so, contact us today. We are always on hand to discuss how to improve your Power Platform strategy and help you get the most value from your initiatives.

Check out
December 2023 INSIGHTS
for more on RPA!



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