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Microsoft Power Platform

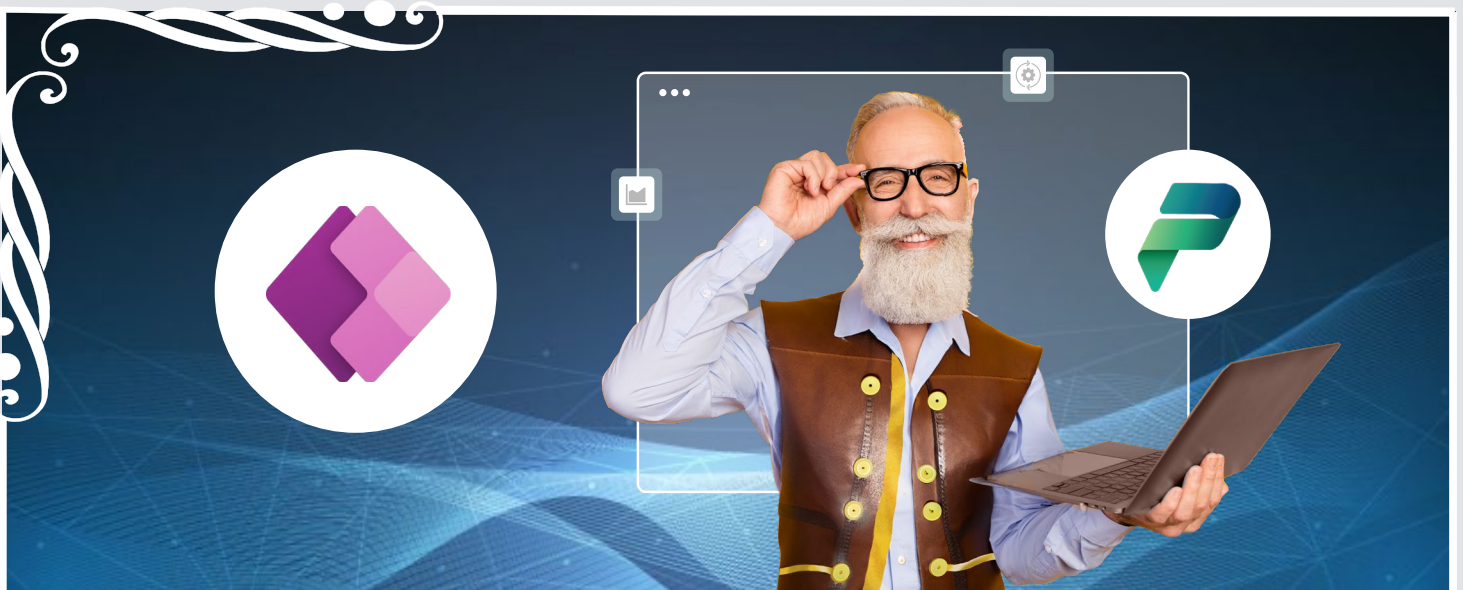# Power Platform Insights
April 2024

A Power App Fairy Tale for Modern Times

In this **springtime edition of INSIGHTS**, Hitachi Solutions Senior Director of Low Code, Joel Lindstrom, wants to tell you a story! He's authored a little narrative that focuses on how power applications have evolved in the last 10 years — through the eyes of Rip Van Winkle! It's a fun way to pinpoint the business challenges and how to deal with your outdated applications so you can get better outcomes. *Ready to turn the page?*

Once upon a time, in the quiet village of Redmond, there lived a Power Apps developer named Rip Van Winkle. Known for his dedication and love for creating apps that made people's lives easier, Rip was always eager to learn about the latest advancements in the world of Power Apps.

One day, **in the year 2018**, Rip decided to take a break from his work and went for a hike in the nearby mountains. Exhausted from his journey, he sat down under a tree and fell into a deep slumber.

Years passed, and the world of Power Apps continued to evolve. Microsoft released numerous updates and capabilities, but Rip remained in his deep sleep. Finally, in the year 2024, Rip awoke and was surprised to discover six years had gone by!

Eager to learn what had changed, Rip hurried back to his workshop. As he opened his old projects, he realized his **apps could be greatly improved by leveraging the latest Power Apps capabilities.**

Fairy Tale
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COPILOT

First, Rip **explored the new Copilot feature.** This AI-powered assistant guided him through the app creation process, offering intelligent suggestions and best practices. With Copilot's help, Rip was able **to rapidly prototype new app ideas** and layouts using the enhanced drag-and-drop controls and responsive layout containers. His apps had never looked better! Not only that, but he could also use Copilot to **edit his app with in-line actions.** This meant that he could prompt directly from within galleries, text input, and other controls, and didn't have to hunt for the settings he needed to change. "Wow, that is so much faster!" said Rip.

DATA INTEGRATION

Next, Rip dove into the **latest data integration options**. He was thrilled to discover there were hundreds more connectors than there were when he started his nap. And so many of the clunky ways he used to work (like dumping production data into a SharePoint list) were no longer needed. He also noticed the **ability to make direct SQL Server stored procedure call**s straight from Power Apps, enabling advanced data operations. He immediately updated some of his apps that used Power Automate flows to call stored procedures, making the apps more performant and the users happier.

Question of the Month

Q: "In organizations that already have established Dynamics 365 development teams, do you often see the existing team handle Power Platform work or do you see them hire specific resources just for Power Platform work?" — Alex F.

A: In organizations that already have established Dynamics 365 development teams, the approach to handling Power Platform often depends on the size of the organization, the complexity of the projects, and the existing team's skills and capacity.

Here are two common scenarios:

Existing Dynamics 365 team handles Power Platform work

- Since Dynamics 365 and Power Platform are tightly integrated and share a common foundation, many Dynamics 365 developers are well-equipped to work with Power Platform tools like Power Apps, Power Automate, and Power BI.

- If the existing team has the capacity and the necessary skills, they may take on Power Platform projects in addition to their Dynamics 365 work. This approach can be more cost-effective and efficient, as it leverages the team's existing knowledge and familiarity with Microsoft's ecosystem.

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DESIGN

Eager to do more, Rip learned about the **power of the Fluent Theme Designer app**, a tool that allowed for the creation of Theme Json objects. These objects could then be applied across all components on a page, ensuring a cohesive look and feel. By adopting a consistent theme, Rip's apps offered a visually seamless experience that felt professional and polished.

Rip found that these controls not only **enhanced the aesthetics of his apps** but also **improved their performance and user interaction**. Leveraging responsive containers, he could ensure his apps looked great on any device. The transition to modern Fluent UI controls further allowed him to provide a more elegant and intuitive user experience, with controls that felt familiar to his users and integrated seamlessly with the overall theme of his applications.

Rip's app users had always complained their apps didn't work well offline. This is why the built-in Dataverse offline support for canvas apps also caught his eye. It allowed him to build **apps that worked seamlessly in connected and disconnected scenarios.** It also simplified his app formulas since he no longer had to use complex load and save functions, and app administrators could now modify the offline filters without editing the application.

Question of the Month

Hiring specific resources for Power Platform work

- In large organizations with big Dynamics 365 deployments, the D365 developers will likely be busy enough just working on the Dynamics deployment.

- If the existing team has the capacity and the necessary skills, they may take on Power Platform projects in addition to their Dynamics 365 work. This approach can be more cost-effective and efficient, as it leverages the team's existing knowledge and familiarity with Microsoft's ecosystem.

- Developers who just focus on Dynamics 365 will generally be very familiar with model-driven apps and certain types of cloud flows, but may not be proficient with canvas apps, desktop flows, or working with connectors other than Dataverse.

- Highly segmented organizations may have the Power Platform and Dynamics 365 owned by different groups due to who owns them. For example, the sales organization might own the CRM system, while IT or other groups may own Power Platform from a budgetary perspective.

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FLOWS, CHARTS, FORMULAS

On the formula side, Rip was impressed to learn that his **favorite Excel-like formulas were now an open-source programming language called Power FX,** and that there were many more functions from which to choose. Rip couldn't contain his excitement when he discovered the new functions and language enhancements in Power Apps. It felt like a whole new world of possibilities had opened up before him. The **'With'** and **'As'** operators quickly became his favorite tools, allowing him to write cleaner, more efficient code. With the **'With'** function, he could create temporary variables within a block of code, which made his formulas more readable and reduced the need for repetitive calculations. The **'As'** operator took this clarity to the next level by letting him specify the data type of variables, minimizing errors and ensuring formulas were used correctly.

But that wasn't all — Rip stumbled upon the **'Trace'** function, and it was like finding a hidden treasure. This powerful debugging tool allowed him to write custom messages to the Power Apps monitor, providing real-time telemetry and diagnostic logs. It was a game-changer for troubleshooting complex apps. By using **'Trace'** alongside the Power Apps monitor, Rip could now track down issues faster than ever before. He could log not just text messages but also variable values at specific points in his app's execution, giving him a deep understanding of how his app behaved during runtime. It was like having a secret window into the inner workings of his applications.

Question of the Month

- In some cases, organizations may choose to hire dedicated resources specifically for Power Platform development, especially if the volume of work is high or if they require specialized skills. This approach allows the Dynamics 365 team to focus on their core responsibilities while ensuring Power Platform projects receive the necessary attention and expertise.

- Dedicated Power Platform resources can work closely with the Dynamics 365 team to ensure seamless integration and alignment between the two platforms.

Factors that influence the decision to use existing resources or hire dedicated resources include:

- The complexity and scale of Power Platform projects
- The existing team's workload and capacity
- The skills and experience of the Dynamics 365 team with Power Platform
- The organization's budget and resources
- The long-term strategy for leveraging Power Platform within the organization

Fairy Tale

These advanced functions and debugging tools completely revolutionized the way Rip developed and maintained his Power Apps.

> **With more concise, readable, and robust formulas at his fingertips, he could develop apps much faster and ensure they performed better than ever.**

And when issues did arise, the Power Apps monitor and **'Trace'** function allowed him to identify and resolve them quickly, guaranteeing a smooth and reliable experience for his users.

UI/UE

Rip then turned his attention to the **end-user experience,** focusing on **improving the responsiveness, theming, and modernization of his apps with Fluent UI controls.** He discovered that with the new theming components, he could create, manage, and share themes that aligned with his organizational brand — offering a consistent experience across all apps. This enabled him to define multiple design properties for controls and components such as colors, fonts, and borders, which were automatically applied to his app designs. Rip appreciated how this streamlined the design process, allowing him to concentrate on the business logic and user problems he aimed to solve rather than manually selecting the styling for each component in the app.

Question of the Month

No matter which scenario you choose, the key to success lies in strong coordination. Administrative decisions need to be synchronized, knowledge of platform updates should be shared, and strategy planning must be undertaken to maximize licensing and share best practices across the team.

For instance, the Dynamics 365 team might create a solution requiring Dynamics 365 licenses where a more cost-effective alternative could have been achieved using a Power App. Or your Power Apps team might attempt to build a custom Power App for something that would be better suited for Dynamics 365. Given both Dynamics 365 and Power Apps are administered via the Power Platform Admin center, and updates in the Power Platform often affect Dynamics, close coordination is not just beneficial but essential. This coordination ensures the organization can leverage all the capabilities of the Power Platform and Dynamics 365 efficiently while avoiding unnecessary costs and duplication of effort.

> *Do you have a question for our monthly Power Platform Insights newsletter?*
>
> *Send an email to*
> *powerplatformanswers@hitachisolutions.com*

SECURITY

Rip next reviewed the security enhancements. With modern business units, Rip could finally assign people roles in different business units, vastly simplifying his application security. And hierarchical security now let him ignore disabled users in the hierarchy.

With all his updates complete, Rip turned to deployments. Back in 2018, many things did not work in solutions, so Rip would spend a lot of time manually moving apps, flows, and recreating connectors. He was pleasantly surprised to find that not only could he fully "solutionize" all of the assets in his application, including the Power BI reports, but **he could now also use standard Power Platform Pipelines to deploy the solutions and make his life easier** (and more secure as solutions are automatically backed up to a source code repository). And the solution checker gave him suggestions on how to make his applications more accessible and performant.

> **With all these efficiency updates and improvements, Rip's Power Apps were now more powerful, user-friendly, and capable of meeting the evolving needs of users and businesses alike.**

And so, Rip Van Winkle, the Power Apps developer, continued to create innovative solutions, embracing the new features and capabilities that Microsoft had released during his enchanted slumber. His apps — powered by AI, rich data integration, offline support, and enhanced user experiences — set a new standard for app development in the village of Redmond. The end...until the next release of Power Apps, that is!

Our tale may be ended
But what we learned is true
If your apps be old
You have work to do.

Power Apps is changing, with controls that are modern
ALM pipelines, new functions so awesome
Revisit your old apps, let this be the lesson
Simplify offline, improve delegation.

Copilot's here to prototype quickly
Prompt to make tables, or inline from gall'ry
Boring apps will make users, like Rip, want to snooze
Give them modern apps they'll love to use.

Do you need a Power Platform Kickstart?

In an ever-evolving business climate, organizations are seeking strategies to harness technology more effectively for business growth and innovation. Many companies have started to adopt the Power Platform but lack a cohesive vision for how they will use the technology, strategy for prioritization and business justification, rationalization of when to use standard vs premium connectors, or a plan of what they should build next.

Hitachi Solutions can help with this journey. We are one of an exclusive group of Microsoft partners authorized to deliver the Power CAT Vision Metrics and Value Measurement workshops.

The Value of Participating in a Workshop

The workshops will help you identify your priorities for Power Platform development, establish processes for quantifying return on investment (ROI), and build a multi-year plan.

Here's a glance at what these workshops offer:

Tailored Expertise — Drawing from insights across industries, these sessions are designed to align with your business needs, ensuring relevance and applicability.

Co-creation of Vision — Collaboratively design a Power Platform vision and roadmap that resonates with your strategic vision.

Effective Storytelling — Gain the tools to craft compelling narratives around your successes, enhancing engagement across your organization.

Strategic Value Measurement — Learn to assess and articulate the strategic value of Power Platform solutions within your business context.

Prioritized Growth Roadmap — Devise a roadmap of initiatives prioritized to support sustainable and supportable growth.

Objective Setting — Establish clear, purposeful objectives and key results that reflect a shared vision of success.

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BLOG

Should There be an App for That?

Read Now

Do You Need a Power Platform...

By engaging with Hitachi Solutions in these workshops, you can anticipate the following tangible and strategic benefits:

Empowered Decision Making — Equip yourself with the knowledge to make informed decisions that drive purposeful platform growth and investment returns.

Strategic Alignment — Ensure your Power Platform initiatives are directly contributing to your overarching business strategies and values.

Enhanced ROI — Through targeted strategies and metrics, visualize a clearer path to realizing a return on your Power Platform investments.

Unified Vision — Foster a culture of commitment and collaboration by getting your team aligned on the platform's direction and potential.

Scalable Success — With a focus on measurable outcomes and storytelling, create a framework for replicating and scaling success across the organization.

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Take the Next Step with Hitachi Solutions

Embarking on one of these workshops ensures any organization, regardless of its size or industry, can harness the power of the Power Platform to achieve its strategic goals.

If you're ready to unlock the full potential of your Power Platform investment and drive meaningful, sustainable growth, reach out to Hitachi Solutions today. Schedule your workshop and take the first step towards a future vision of rapid digital transformation with the Microsoft Power Platform.

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