



Partner: Affordable Business Solutions

Partner Web Site: www.abs.in

Partner Size: 50 employees

Company: Raman FibreScience

Country or Region: India

Industry: Professional services—Business and IT consulting

Partner Profile

Bangalore, India-based Affordable Business Solutions (ABS) aggregates business process and analytics consulting with IT services and solutions for small and midsize businesses in India.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics™
 - Microsoft Dynamics AX
 - Microsoft Dynamics CRM
 - Microsoft Dynamics NAV
- Microsoft® Office
 - Microsoft Office Project Server 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows® Small Business Server 2003
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
 - Microsoft SQL Server™ 2005
- Services
 - Microsoft Partner Program

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Solution Provider Delivers Greater Flexibility to Customers

“We’ve experienced 50 percent year-over-year growth, but, really, our opportunities are limitless because the Software + Services model removes ... [price as an obstacle] for our customers.”

Srikant Rao, Chief Executive Officer, Affordable Business Solutions

Affordable Business Solutions (ABS) provides business process and analytics consulting combined with IT solutions for small businesses. To add value for its customers, ABS opted to offer Microsoft® business solutions as a Software + Services model so that its customers could take advantage of the technologies while only paying a monthly fee. ABS has seen a 50 percent annual growth rate and expects that trend to continue.

Business Needs

Traditionally, companies look to serve customers in their own geographic area before branching out to the rest of the world. In India, however, the vast majority of IT companies offer services that target non-Indian customers, and those who do focus on the Indian market tend to sell to enterprise customers, despite the recent upsurge in the number of India’s small businesses.

Affordable Business Solutions (ABS), based in Bangalore, chose a different direction. At

its inception in 2004, the company’s leaders targeted India’s small and midsize businesses—a market that is made up of more than 8 million companies. “We conducted an informal market survey and determined that many small businesses wanted to invest in both business processes and information technology but needed guidance along the way,” says Srikant Rao, Chief Executive Officer for Affordable Business Solutions.

Companies in India had some options for both business process consulting and IT

solutions. However, their choices mainly consisted of either freelance management consultants without a lot of IT knowledge or local companies that built software but lacked credibility with customers. Recalls Rao, “We decided to add to our business consulting capabilities by providing something different: cost-effective IT business solutions, with packaged software from a reputable vendor.”

In 2005, ABS became an independent software vendor (ISV) for Microsoft® technologies, but the cost of the solutions was too much for many small businesses. “Between the sales cycle and the costs of implementation, training, and ongoing support, we couldn’t deploy the solutions cost-effectively enough to include small businesses in our consulting practice,” says Rao. “We needed another way to reach these potential customers.”

Solution

ABS considered the idea of hosting business applications for its customers on a subscription basis, but that plan initially met with skepticism from small businesses. “At the time, reliable access to the Internet was relatively new in a lot of areas, so we had to prove to potential customers that they could work securely and fully use their business applications over the Internet,” says Rao.

ABS decided to join the Microsoft Partner Program in November 2005 as a Microsoft Dynamics™ business software implementation partner. “We knew that by selling Microsoft Dynamics, we could pique the interest of India’s small businesses,” says Rao. “We knew that we could overcome their cost-related barriers and deliver real business value by using a Software + Services model.”

With the Software + Services model, small-business customers can eliminate up-front

capital expenditures and obviate the need to hire, train, and retain in-house software administration support staff. For ABS customer Raman FibreScience—a Mysore-based company that designs, develops, and manufactures special fiber-based products—choosing a hosted solution made it possible for the company to enter into business with a fully functional IT system that handles not only general business essentials but also its manufacturing side.

“We wanted to have our systems in place from the very start,” says Aroon Raman, Managing Director for Raman FibreScience. “So we looked for a lower up-front investment that would provide us with scalability and outsourced operational management, without forcing us to compromise on functionality. Working with ABS and its hosted Microsoft Dynamics AX offering has helped us set up streamlined business processes quickly and intelligently.”

Benefits

ABS has found that a subscription-based model made a tremendous impact on its growth and its ability to support customers. What’s more, ABS uses the Software + Services model to bring valuable business solutions to customers that might otherwise be unable to afford them.

■ **Greater opportunity for growth.** Because the Software + Services model is so affordable for prospective customers, ABS can approach a wider array of companies. “We’ve experienced 50 percent year-over-year growth, but, really, our opportunities are limitless because the Software + Services model removes up-front capital expenditures and ongoing staffing expenses as obstacles for our customers,” says Rao. “In the last four months, for

instance, we’ve closed more sales than we did all last year.”

■ **Increased business scalability.** ABS is using the Software + Services model for more-efficient staffing because the company can support customers without on-site help. “We can add more customers without a commensurate increase in our headcount,” says Ravindra Kini, Chief Operations Officer for Affordable Business Solutions. “Without the Software + Services model, we’d have to provide an IT resource at every customer site because our customers tend not to have their own internal IT staff.”

■ **Improved flexibility for customers.** According to Rao, many customers view subscription-based services as a reduced-risk offering with more business flexibility than on-site software installation. Says Rao, “Many small businesses have made previous investments in solutions that didn’t work properly. With the Software + Services model, there’s a reduced sense of commitment, which makes it easier for business owners to make the initial decision to engage with us. Plus, they have the flexibility to add to their services as their companies grow and change.”

■ **Partnership support for enhanced credibility.** ABS enjoys the technical assistance and insight into business strategy that it receives from its partnership with Microsoft. “Our partnership provides us with tremendous support, which helps us add even greater value for our customers,” concludes Rao. “Customers have a positive reaction to our relationship with Microsoft because it increases our credibility and further reduces any hesitations about Internet-based solutions.”