

# Chicago Partner Affiliates with Master VAR to Grow Practice



## Overview

### Partner Profile

SBS Group Chicago, formerly known as Lakeshore Consulting, focused primarily on Microsoft Dynamics GP and the process manufacturing sector.

### Business Situation

Lakeshore Consulting wanted to take their business to the next level, but found it difficult to make the deep capital and human resource investments required.

### Solution

In 2010 Lakeshore Consulting joined forces with SBS Group through a program that is now part of the Microsoft Dynamics Master VAR program, giving them an immediate boost to their organizational capacity.

### Benefits

- Added an additional consultant to handle the increase in consulting work.
- Competing and winning larger, more complex deals.
- Helped close a large Microsoft Dynamics AX deal.

### Situation

Lakeshore Consulting's principal Paul Silvani faced a dilemma common to many small businesses: Just staying on top of current business can take all your time, so where will you find the time and capital resources you need to make a significant change and grow to the next level?

"We realized that, in order to grow, we needed to make a change somewhere," said Silvani. "We wanted to get bigger, we wanted to grow, but it's hard to try to get to that next level."

Silvani considered partnering with another Microsoft Dynamics partner, but felt that the option to affiliate with a Microsoft Dynamics Master VAR would give his group the best shot at growing the business.

### Solution

Silvani reached out to the SBS Group, and in 2010 became part of the SBS network of service providers, changing the name of his practice to SBS Group Chicago.

According to Silvani, "being one of a group, instead of just being one entity or joining another entity" is one of the primary advantages of affiliating with a Master VAR. "They have the resources established, such as marketing, sales, management, a lot of processes and procedures, the relationship with Microsoft."

"It really comes down to bigger opportunities, more diverse deals. I'm more able to focus on more direct revenue-generating activities."

Paul Silvani  
General Manager, SBS Group Chicago

## FEATURES

## BENEFITS

### Access to Resources

By affiliating with the SBS Group, Silvani's organization gained access to services they couldn't easily have added to their small practice. In addition to strong business processes, SBS Group can offer Silvani's group additional consultants and sales resources, or as Silvani put it, *"more bodies with more skills."*

### Growth with Focus

Joining SBS Group has enabled Silvani to grow his practice, including hiring an additional consultant to handle the added workload. Using SBS sales resources has enabled Silvani's group to close deals involving products they hadn't previously sold, including Microsoft Dynamics CRM and Microsoft Dynamics AX.

### Bigger Deals

Silvani's primary objective in affiliating with SBS Group was to grow his business, and this objective is being achieved in a big way.

*"It helped us win a large Microsoft Dynamics AX opportunity. We're delivering much larger solutions to much larger customers with much larger expectations. We were able to complete the deal, whereas in the past we may have been shut out due to our size."*

### More Consistent Marketing

Regarding marketing, Silvani voices a challenge common to many smaller partner organizations.

*"When we had time, we would do it, and when we got busy, we would be very up and down. Now, because marketing is being done at the group level, we're seeing more leads, and our customers are getting more involved in the process."*

### Managing the Microsoft Relationship

An important but less measurable benefit derived from affiliating with a Microsoft Dynamics Master VAR is the ability to focus the relationship points with Microsoft for a number of organizations, instead of requiring each practice to maintain all the access points individually.

Silvani appreciates that SBS Group can maintain a strong, broad, and deep relationship with Microsoft, which allows him to focus more on winning new deals and growing his business.

*"Managing the Microsoft relationship does take time and now it's managed somewhere else. As part of SBS Group, we have regular engagement practice meetings, I get really concise updates, and I'm spending more time on revenue-generating activities, such as consulting and sales."*

*"We're delivering much larger solutions to much larger customers with much larger expectations... whereas in the past we may have been shut out due to our size."*

Paul Silvani  
General Manager, SBS Group Chicago

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SBS Group Chicago

## Results

Silvani credits his decision to affiliate with SBS Group as a key reason he's been able to grow his business. Being part of a national organization with strong product and practice skills has allowed him to reach more prospects, sell more solutions, and win bigger deals. And because SBS Group handles many of the administrative details involved in running a successful practice, Silvani has more time to focus on the part of the business he cares most passionately about—delivering the right solution to customers.

As part of the SBS Group, Silvani has been able to represent a broader range of Microsoft solutions to larger, more diverse, and more complex customers. He spends less time worrying about marketing and managing his relationship with Microsoft, which gives him the time and focus to score big deals and build his practice.

## Key Takeaways

Silvani has just one piece of advice for partners who may be looking at joining a Master VAR group: seriously consider it. *"If you're trying to take your business to another level, Master VAR is a definite way to achieve some of your goals."*

Regarding the issue of changing the name of his business, Silvani understands that this is a major concern for many partners, but reports that changing from Lakeshore Consultants to SBS Group Chicago "really has been a non-issue to clients." Both from the customer's standpoint as well as internally, Silvani says the change has been well received. *"There's more to be gained by being part of a group than by not being part of a group. It's that simple."*

For more information about the Microsoft Dynamics Master VAR program, visit <http://aka.ms/MasterVAR>