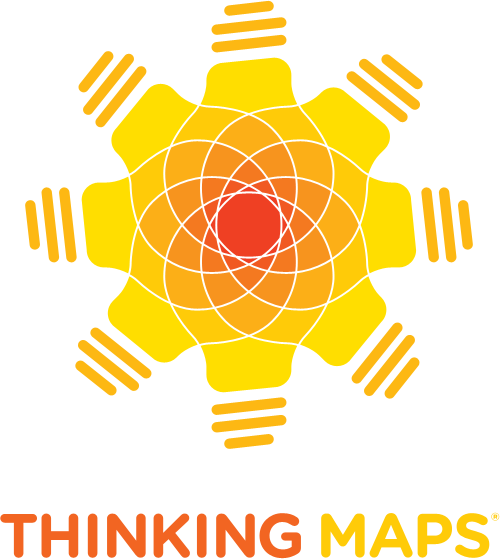
ERP Solution Helps Thinking Maps Streamline Everyday Work to Improve Customer Service



Microsoft Dynamics Results Case Study

Based in Cory, North Carolina, Thinking Maps is an education services company that produces “Thinking Maps,” a language of eight visual patterns each based on a fundamental thought process. Teachers can use these patterns individually and in combination across every grade level and curriculum area as an integrated set of tools for lifelong learning.

Results

* Ease day-to-day tasks, freeing up time for customer service
* Hasten order fulfillment, improving customer service
* Streamline reporting
* Enable sales staff with financial insights

Industry

Education services

Country or Region

United States

Customer Size

28 employees

Number of Users

4 employees

Connect with Thinking Maps

[www.thinkingmaps.com](http://www.thinkingmaps.com)

“The simple interface and comprehensive functionality of Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 enables me to do my job without my ERP solution getting in the way. It just works the way I need it to, and that’s really all I can ask for.”

Jonathan McCarron, Accounting and Customer Service, Thinking Maps

How do you improve learning in students from elementary grades through high school? This is a question that Cary, North Carolina–based Thinking Maps set out to answer. The answer was a series of visual learning tools— “Thinking Maps”—that help students establish deeper meaning and understanding from the information gleaned from everyday teaching.

Thinking Maps maintains its operations with a small team of seven in its North Carolina offices, and offers its products nationwide, through a dispersed team of 21 sales representatives.

# A Time for Change

In 2007, after the company expanded into new markets, Thinking Maps decided that it had reached the limits of the Peachtree accounting software it had been using to manage its business. Sabrina Clark, Accounting Manager for Thinking Maps, says, “We were beginning to grow, and Peachtree really couldn’t keep up with all the data we were inputting into the system. We were having to archive our information, and couldn’t do things like multi-year accounting. Further, with all the information we had in the system, it would often glitch on us.”

## Choosing Microsoft Dynamics GP

After evaluating leading accounting packages, Thinking Maps chose Microsoft Dynamics GP. Says Jonathan McCarron, Accounting and Customer Service for Thinking Maps, “We looked at upgrading Peachtree, as well as solutions from Sage and QuickBooks, but with our long-term growth in mind, only Microsoft Dynamics GP offered the level of professionalism and features we would need.”

McCarron also notes that: “Out of the box, Microsoft Dynamics GP offered the capabilities we needed. It was pretty much a plug-and-play solution, which was good for a company of our size.”

# The Dynamic Business

## After using Microsoft Dynamics GP for more than five years, Thinking Maps recently upgraded to Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013. Looking back at the company’s history with the system, McCarron says, “In all our growth, Microsoft Dynamics GP hasn’t shown its age. It’s been able to handle everything we needed and the volume of work we have—all without us having to worry about customization.”

“From the time I save every day on reporting as well as on simply printing things like invoices, I can go right to answering the phones.”

Jonathan McCarron,   
Accounting and Customer Service, Thinking Maps

## A Solution That Meets Day-to-Day Business Needs

Using accounting software to get the day’s work done shouldn’t be a chore or hindrance, and for McCarron it’s not, thanks to the simple user interface of Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 (See Figure 1). He explains, “If you are going to sit at a computer for eight hours a day and spend most of that time in one program, that program needs to be aesthetically pleasing, not utilitarian. Having something that is easy on the eyes can make a big difference both physically and mentally, and Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 certainly provides that.”

C:\Users\Andrew\Desktop\Thinking Maps Case Study\Thinking Maps MSFT Feedback and Incorp\Business Analyzer Home Page.tif

Figure 1. Analytics using the simple, intuitive interface of Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013.

When pairing this enhanced user experience with new features—such as the ability to manage all windows in the system separately so he can display a customer’s sales history next to an email from the customer in Microsoft Outlook, or the ability to print a job directly to a PDF or printer, —McCarron has found his day-to-day tasks made much easier. “The simple interface and comprehensive functionality of Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 enables me to do my job without my ERP solution getting in the way,” says McCarron. “It just works the way I need it to, and that’s really all I can ask for.”

## Fast Order Fulfillment, Improved Customer Service

The ease of use of Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013 also contributes to faster sales order processing. Says McCarron, “When someone places an order with us, we often tell them it will take five to ten business days, but with Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013, we can often get the packing slip to the warehouse in five minutes or less. It lets us be flexible for our customers’ sake, allowing us to be responsive to 90 percent of last-minute orders and emergencies.”

## Easy, Powerful Reporting

With Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013, Thinking Maps has found reporting—whether standardized or customized—to be a breeze. Says McCarron, “If someone needs a specific report, I can go right into Microsoft Dynamics GP, choose the fields that person wants to see, export to Microsoft Excel, and then it’s good to go.”

And, as McCarron goes on to point out, the value of being able to work in Excel can’t be overstated. He says. “If I wasn’t able to pull down a menu and export to Excel, I don’t know what I would do. I would probably just have to tell people that I couldn’t get them the information they needed. That’s how huge it is.”

## Actionable Insight, Closing the Gap Between the Back and Front Office

With the ability to draw on a comprehensive set of company information, Thinking Maps can use Microsoft Dynamics GP to direct positive change in the company. Explains McCarron, “From the data we capture, we can provide our sales managers with insight into what items are or aren’t selling and in what regions that is occurring. That allows the sales managers to then follow up with their sales staff to take action.”

For Thinking Maps, a lot has certainly changed since deploying Microsoft Dynamics GP. And by taking advantage of the solution’s powerful capabilities and simple, intuitive interface, Thinking Maps is now running its small business more efficiently than ever, all while providing improved customer service and keeping pace with ongoing growth and change.

# Next Steps

* [Read more about Microsoft Dynamics GP 2013](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/erp-gp-overview.aspx)
* Read about the full line of [Microsoft Dynamics solutions for small and mid-sized businesses](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/erp-small-midsize-business.aspx)
* [Connect with Microsoft Dynamics](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/contact-us.aspx)
* [Become a Dynamic Business](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/about.aspx)

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For more information about Microsoft Dynamics, go to:

[www.microsoft.com/dynamics](http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics)