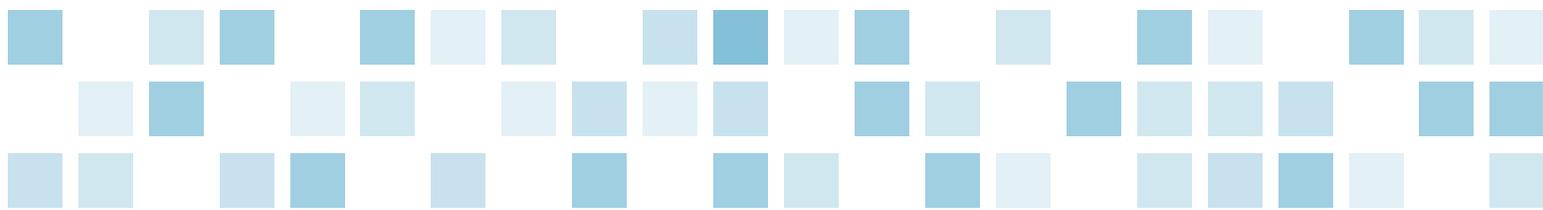


# Using existing technology to build a more efficient enterprise



## Prepared by:

**Mike Nafziger**, *Principal*, McGladrey LLP  
612.376.9249, michael.nafziger@mcgladrey.com

July 2013

Over the past 30 years, the use of technology in business operations has steadily increased. The first mass-market personal computers in the early 1980s increased worker productivity, and the rise of Internet access opened a whole new range of possibilities for communication, e-commerce, marketing and research. Today, mobile devices are the latest example of how technology is continually reshaping the business landscape.

Despite those long-term investments, most companies had not really tested — or accurately measured — just how efficient such technical tools could help them become. However, that scenario began to change during the recent global recession.

“In the downturn, companies shed a lot of people, which forced them to get creative with technology they already owned to fill the gaps,” says Mike Nafziger, a principal in the Technology Consulting practice with McGladrey’s Minneapolis office. “Now, one of the reasons we’re not seeing a big bounce back in hiring is because those same firms figured out how to use that technology to drive new efficiencies.”

In this paper, we will take a closer look at factors that define an efficient enterprise, common Microsoft tools that are often underutilized and ways to leverage and integrate technologies for greater efficiency. We will also cover ways to help business leaders minimize risk and maximize success when launching an efficient enterprise initiative.

## Key aspects of the efficient enterprise

Generally speaking, an efficient enterprise could be described as one that makes thoughtful, deliberate use of all resources to increase work output, while keeping staffing costs at a reasonable level. Some of the hallmarks of a truly efficient organization include:

**Collaboration.** In the not-too-distant past, collaboration might have taken place during unstructured opportunities (such as chance hallway meetings) or more formal gatherings (such as conference calls or face-to-face meetings). However, the major drawbacks to those approaches are that they rarely coincide with real-time issues, and they don’t provide reliable forums where people can work, share and brainstorm using the same information.

On the other hand, commonly available technologies such as Yammer (a secured, enterprise social networking technology from Microsoft) allow colleagues, business partners and others to collaborate on the fly to solve problems or maximize opportunities. For example, assume an employee uncovered a significant sales opportunity, but lacked key pieces of industry-specific background information to develop a competitive proposal. Under those circumstances, the employee could easily post a query to the company's Yammer sales support group, where colleagues with the right expertise could quickly provide the detail necessary to help close the deal.

"These types of tools provide corporate, Facebook-type experiences, while allowing people to collaborate around key goals," Nafziger says. "Rather than sending a bunch of email or leaving a lot of voicemails, workers can just post the information where the right people can see it and respond."

**Speed/velocity.** In business, speed is critical when moving from opportunity to action. That's why it is important for leaders to first assess operational areas where key outcomes are bogged down, and then align the right technologies to help accelerate informed decision-making and overall time to action. In concert with the use of technology, improving velocity may also require retooling certain business processes and demonstrating to staff how the new approach will make their day-to-day activities quicker and more productive.

For example, consider a standard sales operation. Good representatives will typically research leads before approaching key prospects, which takes time and effort. Meanwhile, mediocre salespeople will just pick up the phone and call prospects, frequently squandering a potentially larger sale — or any sale at all.

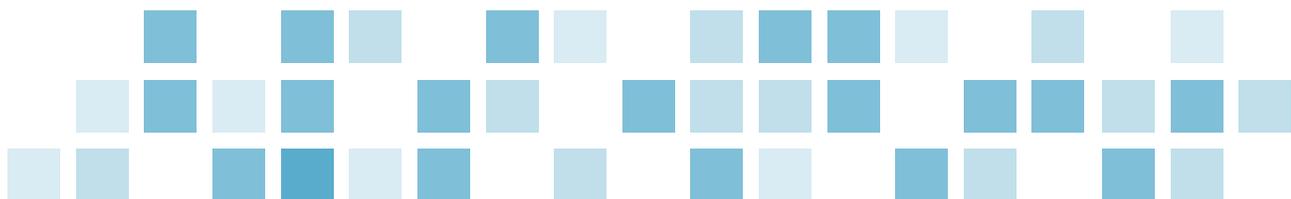
"But if you change that business process so that the CRM product delivers the not only the lead, but real-time information about the lead from a variety of sources, that's fast, actionable information," says Nafziger. "All that's required once you have that type of technology in place is to train the reps on how to use the information."

**Responsiveness.** Social technologies such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are more than marketing portals, listening posts and outward communication conduits for companies. They also allow businesses to establish ongoing dialogue with customers and other external stakeholders, which raises the level of engagement. Just as importantly, such technologies allow companies to quickly respond to commentary about positive or negative experiences with the company and its products or services.

## Efficiency means getting more from existing tools

In recent years, there's been explosive growth in cloud- and server-based technologies available for commercial use. Within the Microsoft stack alone, there are now over 200 licensed cloud services, which provide access to powerful computing applications, at a fraction of the cost of buying those services on an individual basis. However, most companies use only just a tiny amount of the capabilities built into these existing tools. Consider the following examples, all from the Microsoft stack:

**Microsoft Windows 8 and Office 2013.** In this most recent upgrade, Windows 8 is an operating system now fully compatible for desktop computers, tables and smartphones. The improved "touch friendly" interface is an asset for mobile devices, and HomeGroup capabilities now allow users to share and collaborate on content across multiple devices in a designated group. Meanwhile, Office 2013 is now optimized for touch- and pen-based mobile devices, and its applications are designed to integrate with cloud-based Microsoft Office Web Apps and SkyDrive storage.



**Microsoft OneNote.** This note-taking application, typically included with the Microsoft Office suite, is a tremendously underused asset. This versatile tool can capture typed or written text, as well as video, audio, electronic documents, Web pages or other information sources, in an organized, searchable form. The tool will even convert handwriting to text. OneNote can be easily leveraged across desktop, tablet and smartphone platforms, and all content can be saved to the cloud-based Microsoft SkyDrive and exported for collaboration via Microsoft SharePoint.

“OneNote is great, because it’s a way to organize structured and unstructured material without putting it in a file drawer or on a hard drive — neither of which are useful if other people need access to it,” says Nafziger. “While a lot of people use Microsoft Word to take notes, I believe OneNote is a much more efficient option for that task.”

**Microsoft SharePoint.** While SharePoint has been around for years, most organizations still view it largely as a means to manage documents or intranet content. But that’s only the beginning. This tool can actually become the foundation for enterprise content sharing and collaboration, from team sites to managing events or projects at the departmental level, all the way to a fully featured extranet serving customers and other stakeholders. SharePoint integrates seamlessly with Project, Outlook and other applications in the Office suite, works well with social collaboration tools like Yammer and offers substantial work flow automation capabilities.

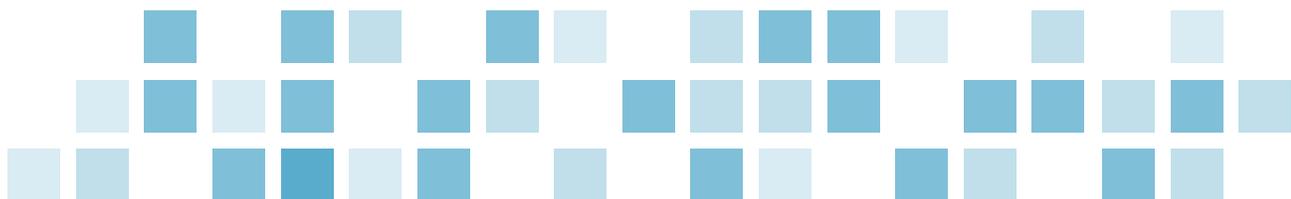
**Microsoft Dynamics CRM.** This customer relationship management software package is typically used in sales or marketing applications, because it allows users to view all interactions a business has with specific customers. But it can also serve as a foundational product that can be used to standardize and automate business processes around structured data. Like the other tools noted above, it also easily integrates with all software applications in the Microsoft Office suite.

**Yammer.** As previously mentioned, this enterprise social network is a powerful tool in the Microsoft stack, used by over 85 percent of Fortune 500 companies. In addition to a free version, which allows basic team collaboration activity, companies can upgrade to a premium service with more customizable tools and security features. Since being acquired by Microsoft in 2012, Yammer collaboration feeds can now be previewed and edited via Office Web Apps, and content can now be saved to the cloud via SkyDrive Pro.

## Leveraging and integrating the tools

It’s important to understand that simply maximizing the capabilities of technology applications will not automatically make an organization more efficient. To genuinely reduce time to action, increase collaboration and ensure delivery of the right information at the right time, use the following steps:

**Look for the best opportunities to drive organizational efficiencies.** In every business, there are bottlenecks or roadblocks that consistently hinder performance. In some cases, identifying those slowdowns is a fairly straightforward process. However, in most situations, a trained third party may be the best choice to isolate the problem. At McGladrey, such situations are diagnosed using the company’s proprietary *Rapid Assessment*® process, which identifies and clarifies problems before recommending technical and process solutions to improve efficiency.



**Determine how technologies support work processes.** As part of any assessment process, careful attention must be paid to existing work flow. This means taking a close look at how employees in targeted areas do their jobs with current technology processes and applications. If existing technology is being underutilized, some work flow re-engineering (cooperatively designed by IT and technology staff and subject matter experts for the target business area) can help maximize the benefits of a new approach.

**Choose technologies that integrate with one another.** Depending on the specific situation, an assessment may reveal that one technology application can improve performance. But most frequently, the prescription will call for a number of tools, carefully arrayed to maximize collaboration, speed and responsiveness. In this scenario, it's critical that the tools work well together.

"Let's say a company has a situation where customer response times are very long and those customers are complaining, which clearly signals a service problem," says Nafziger. "After conducting an assessment, we might combine Microsoft CRM for customer data, Lync for a call center, Yammer for a team collaboration site and perhaps even SharePoint. All of those technologies work seamlessly with one another, which can help employees dramatically improve efficiencies in the customer service experience."

## Managing risks in an efficient enterprise implementation

Clearly, squeezing more value out of existing technology can be a great, cost-neutral way to improve organizational efficiency. But when implementations go badly, the core reason has less to do with technology expertise and much more to do with technology adoption. Put simply, if a new solution doesn't add more value for less effort, end users will quickly abandon it for old practices — even if those practices are inefficient.

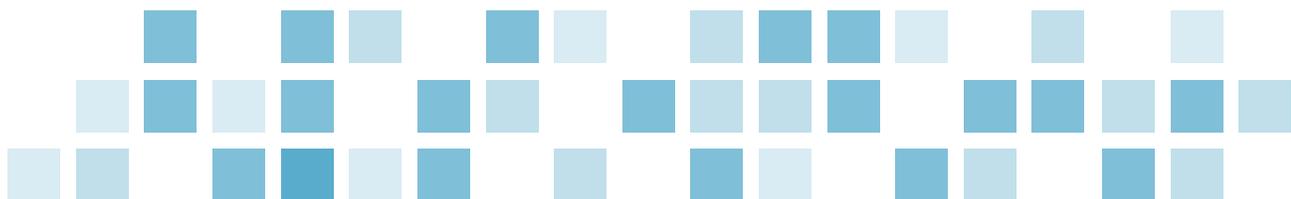
What are some reliable methods to lessen the risks of an efficient enterprise rollout? Consider the following:

**Remember that less can be more.** Work flow process reviews often look at existing people and technology processes as a baseline, without ever asking a simple question: What aspects of those processes are not adding value? By first considering what can be removed from existing work flow, the follow-on process enhancements will generally deliver even higher value.

**Create strong tone from the top.** At the start of any efficient enterprise initiative, there should also be timely communication from senior management, highlighting the organization's commitment to a workplace that seeks to maximize human and technical resources. Over time, that level of consistent communication helps build compliance, because it signals that leadership sees the efficient enterprise as a priority.

**Get experts involved with training.** As previously mentioned, it's important to have both IT and end-user subject matter experts (SMEs) involved with development of process and technical solutions. So, when the efficiency initiative is ready for rollout, it's still a good idea to make these people part of the overall training program. That's because these experts have the best ability to explain why the proposed changes add genuine value.

"Any efficient enterprise initiative that tries to launch without SME involvement is doomed to fail," says Nafziger. "A great example is collaboration. People will say, 'I can collaborate in meetings all day long,' or, 'I can collaborate by phone.' If they can't understand how a new approach will help improve the quality of their day-to-day work life, everything will just fall by the wayside."



**Clearly define success measures.** At the start of each efficient enterprise initiative, there are one or more root problems that need to be solved. Those issues should be captured as current state metrics, against which success measures can be developed. For example, if a core organizational issue is that it takes 90 days to close the typical sale, set post-implementation improvement targets with specific check-in periods (weeks, months or even years, depending on the complexity of the root issue). By establishing, communicating and measuring specific success targets, the project will gain credibility from all levels of the organization.

**800.274.3978**  
**[www.mcgladrey.com](http://www.mcgladrey.com)**

All brands, logos or product names referenced above are the copyrights, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners/holders. No endorsement of any company, organization, product, or person is intended or should be inferred. Any rights not expressly granted herein are reserved.

This document contains general information, may be based on authorities that are subject to change, and is not a substitute for professional advice or services. This document does not constitute assurance, tax, consulting, business, financial, investment, legal or other professional advice, and you should consult a qualified professional advisor before taking any action based on the information herein. McGladrey LLP, its affiliates and related entities are not responsible for any loss resulting from or relating to reliance on this document by any person.

McGladrey LLP is an Iowa limited liability partnership and the U.S. member firm of RSM International, a global network of independent accounting, tax and consulting firms. The member firms of RSM International collaborate to provide services to global clients, but are separate and distinct legal entities that cannot obligate each other. Each member firm is responsible only for its own acts and omissions, and not those of any other party.

McGladrey®, the McGladrey logo, the McGladrey Classic logo, *The power of being understood®*, *Power comes from being understood®*, and *Experience the power of being understood®* are registered trademarks of McGladrey LLP.

© 2013 McGladrey LLP. All Rights Reserved.

