New York City Food Rescue Organization Doubles Deliveries Without Increasing Costs

City Harvest has more than 30 years of experience making the fastest connection between a donor with excess food and New Yorkers in need. Now, it's making an even bigger difference. By improving internal efficiencies and external relationships using Microsoft Dynamics software, City Harvest has nearly doubled its rescued food deliveries while keeping costs the same.

Results
- Twice the food distributed, more food donors engaged
- Streamlined processes
- Easy-to-use software, less to manage

Industry
Nonprofit/Charities & Philanthropic

Country or Region
United States

Customer Size
140 employees

Number of Users
85 employees

Connect with City Harvest

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Matthew Reich, Vice President of Operations, City Harvest

Ending hunger for more than one million people in the Big Apple: it's a vision that City Harvest is pursuing with passion. In Fiscal Year 2013, the food rescue organization will collect more than 42 million pounds of excess food from 2,500 donors including restaurants, grocers, corporate cafeterias, manufacturers, and farms. Using trucks and bicycles, City Harvest delivers the food, usually the same day or the next day, free of charge to some 600 community food programs, which then distribute food to hungry people throughout New York City. Produce constitutes 60 percent of the food that City Harvest distributes, and nutrient-dense food (including produce, protein, and low-fat dairy) constitutes about 70 percent. The organization must move these perishables rapidly, efficiently, and strategically from donor to recipient.

In 2011, City Harvest embarked on a five-year plan to double the amount of food it distributes annually while significantly expanding its work in high-need communities. Goals include delivering an additional 30 million pounds of food a year and raising $30 million more in financial donations by 2016. The organization's leaders recognized that achieving these aggressive growth goals would require significant process and efficiency improvements, so they set out to identify technology tools that could help them more efficiently track food donations, oversee operations, and set a course to fulfill the organization's strategic objectives.

Getting Equipped for Its Mission of Growth

To accommodate growth without increasing costs, City Harvest worked with Microsoft Dynamics Gold Certified Partner MIG & Co. to deploy Microsoft Dynamics GP on-premises and Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online.

City Harvest chose Microsoft Dynamics software because of its financial, supply chain, and customer relationship management (CRM) capabilities, as well as its flexibility and ease of configuration. City Harvest is using the Microsoft Dynamics software out of the box, with no customization. The Microsoft Dynamics CRM-to-GP Adapter and the extenders available in

the Microsoft Dynamics application programming interfaces (APIs) connect components to create a unified enterprise resource planning (ERP) and CRM solution that includes:

- General ledger and inventory management capabilities in Microsoft Dynamics GP.

- Integrated donor and CRM powered by Microsoft Dynamics CRM.

- Food allocation software to automate food distribution across emergency food programs.

- Roadnet Route Planning Software to guide drivers on delivery routes.

"Microsoft Dynamics GP was absolutely the best option for an ERP," says Daron Migirdeyan, Chief Technology Officer of Microsoft Dynamics Gold Certified Partner, MIG & Co. "While most of their peers in the food distribution industry are using separate ERP and logistics solutions and create freight and supply chain systems, with Microsoft Dynamics GP and CRM, we were able to provide City Harvest with end-to-end, integrated functionality built on the Microsoft stack."

Enabling Strategic Food Allocation

As of 2013, City Harvest is one year ahead of schedule on its five-year goals. Preparing for the next round of strategic planning, Matthew Reich, City Harvest Vice President of Operations, and his colleagues are confident in the ability of their Microsoft Dynamics solution to support its longer-term goals. That's a good thing, because hunger in New York City affects more than one million people each year.

Nutritious food donations await delivery to hungry New Yorkers at City Harvest's Food Rescue Facility.

"We want to build the capacity of both City Harvest and the emergency food programs we serve," says Reich. "Our Microsoft Dynamics solution enables us to manage the process of growth more efficiently and strategically, while reflecting excellent stewardship of cash and food donations."

Managing a Growing Inventory
Because City Harvest already used Microsoft Dynamics GP for core financials, it made sense to extend the solution to inventory management functions as well. At any given time, the organization has 600,000 to 700,000 pounds of food in inventory. Microsoft Dynamics GP has improved the accuracy of inventory counts and categorization.

Insight into inventory enables City Harvest staff to allocate food to meet the dietary needs of specific groups and to avoid overages and supply deficits at emergency food programs. "We can inform virtually every department through reports built with Smart List Builder in Microsoft Dynamics GP," says James Safonov, IT Director at City Harvest. "Staff can better match supply with need and vice versa."

Strategic Distribution, Informed Decisions

About 2,200 volunteers generously give their time to help City Harvest fulfill its mission. Here, some of these volunteers package donated food headed for Hurricane Sandy victims.

Microsoft Dynamics GP connects with a system to allot the right mix (fresh produce, dairy, frozen) of inventory daily to the emergency food programs based on what they need. Staff issue sales orders from Microsoft Dynamics GP to notify transportation to pick up food at a donor or make deliveries and drop-offs. The system also generates an inbound load number that can be matched with delivery when it's received.

Armed with real-time inventory data, City Harvest can make decisions about the most effective use of food donations. "When all the butternut squash comes off the vine in late summer, we don't want to end up with more than people will use," explains Reich. "With our inventory management tools, we can make the decision to accept or refer a donation based on facts—real-time information stored in Microsoft Dynamics GP. Today, our food managers have access to inventory and outstanding sales orders and can see our current need and forecast our future need."

Twice the Food Distributed, More Food Donors Engaged
"During our busiest season in 2012, we doubled donations compared to the same period in 2011, kept delivery costs the same—$0.25 per pound—and retained our staff size," notes Reich. "Microsoft Dynamics GP and CRM allowed us to handle these food donations extremely efficiently. We wouldn't have been able to grow this quickly without the new technology."

Its success is built on relationships, and effectively sourcing more food hinges on City Harvest's ability to develop a thriving donor support system. City Harvest is succeeding with Microsoft Dynamics CRM; in fact, the donor development team uses the marketing module to track prospective food donors. Since it began using Microsoft Dynamics CRM, City Harvest has added 2,000 new food donors to its records.

A dashboard with a prospect pipeline helps the team track opportunities and project donations for the coming year. "Microsoft Dynamics CRM is pivotal in our drive to increase food donors and food donations, and maintain and deepen relationships," says Reich.

Streamlined Processes, Better Stewardship
To onboard new agencies and to document audits for regulatory compliance, City Harvest personnel use forms in Microsoft Dynamics CRM running on tablet computers. This data is then exported to Microsoft Dynamics GP. "New online electronic records and data are easily searchable and accessible from anywhere," says Reich.

As a result, Microsoft Dynamics GP and CRM have increased data visibility and improved communication across the donor and customer chain. More efficient route scheduling enables City Harvest to retrieve and deliver more food per trip on its daily routes. The organization plans to extend inventory management to delivery drivers on Windows 8–based handheld devices to give them real-time access to the system from anywhere.

mig & co.

Microsoft

End-to-End Solution, Less to Manage

Eighty-five of the 140 City Harvest employees directly use the solution, but everyone relies on it for their jobs in some way. One of the biggest benefits of having a unified solution has been the integration, immediacy, and automated sharing of information among people and departments.

"Microsoft Dynamics touches every aspect of our operation, from finance to inventory management, to communications with our emergency food programs and food donors," says Reich. "When we create a sales order in Microsoft Dynamics GP for an inbound donation, Microsoft Dynamics CRM generates an email to a whole group of people who can see pending arrivals of a particular product or food type, and plan accordingly."

By choosing to deploy Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online, Reich and his colleagues avoided the initial outlay of expense for infrastructure and gained peace of mind. "The fact that CRM is running on the Microsoft servers made me much more comfortable in terms of backup, recovery, and risk avoidance," says Reich. "I like the fact that people can access it from anywhere without VPN access. The fact that it is in the Microsoft cloud is comforting and reassuring."

James Safonov, IT Director at City Harvest, eagerly anticipates migrating Microsoft Dynamics GP to a cloud-based solution, as well. "If we can outsource more technology management, we can better focus on our mission of food rescue," says Safonov.

Next Steps

- Connect with Microsoft Dynamics
- Watch a video about City Harvest
- Read about ways other organizations use Microsoft Dynamics GP
- Read about how other charitable organizations are using Microsoft Dynamics solutions to help make a difference in their communities