



Apollo's productivity-enhancing cloud journey unlocks a road map for business innovation

With an on-premises CRM supporting all parts of its business and multiple manual processes sapping resources, tour operator Apollo's move to the cloud has not only boosted productivity, enhanced compliance and reduced costs, but provided the business with the opportunity to explore exciting new destinations through data and AI.



Customer

APOLLO

Website: www.apollo.se

Country: Sweden

Industry: Tourism & Hospitality

Company size: 10,300 employees

Customer profile

Apollo is one of the Nordic region's leading tour operators. Serving over one million travellers annually, it provides holidays and city breaks in locations across the globe.

Software and services

Microsoft Dynamics 365
Microsoft Azure
Microsoft Power BI
Voice of the Customer for Dynamics 365

When booking a holiday, we all focus on specific criteria, whether it's the location, ease of travel, safety, or the opportunity to access and enjoy new experiences. Helping millions of travellers enjoy their vacations every year, Apollo understands this and therefore applied the same thinking when embarking on its journey to the cloud, moving its on-premises Dynamics CRM 2011 database to Dynamics 365.

Throughout the business, across the contact centre and phone systems, through marketing and communications and on to employees on site at destinations around the world, up to 90% of Apollo's staff rely on the CRM to carry out their day-to-day work. With that fact in mind, careful consideration was given to determine the best approach to migrating the company's 128 business processes to the cloud, taking into account the ideal destination for its data, migration simplicity, security and future innovation.

"From the business side we always wanted to go to the cloud," says Johnny Nilsson, Apollo's Customer Insight Manager. "We understood the possibilities that come from being online, such as taking advantage of Power BI and other applications."

A new destination

Focusing on the opportunities available in the cloud, not to mention benefiting from a more evergreen solution to avoid such significant upgrades in the future, Apollo enlisted the help of two partners, Avega Group and CRM-Konsulterna. Avega Group took the role of commercial contacts, project management and application consultants, while CRM-Konsulterna provided overall architectural responsibility for the solution, the system architect, developers and migration experts. "From the start we said we, together with Avega Group, would take Apollo online," says Gustaf Westerlund, founder of CRM-Konsulterna. "There were concerns around the large database, and, of course, these are things you have to take seriously – but we agreed they would not prevent a move to the cloud."

Manageable migration

Key to the migration was finding the simplest route to moving a database close to 300GB to the cloud before implementing new features and capabilities. Following a 1-to-1 upgrade paradigm, data was transferred directly, alongside the upgrading of significant amounts of code without impacting the underlying entities.

With its phone system integrated with Dynamics 365, customers calling Apollo's contact centre can now provide their booking reference while in the queue, to ensure the booking agent has the required information to hand.





"When you are refurbishing your bathroom, you should stay in there and finish it, not start working on the kitchen," says Gustaf. "Often, during the migration, we felt there were design elements we could change or improve, but we had to hold ourselves back. If we were to change everything we wanted to change, then we would never have done it on time."

Dynamics 365 also enabled Apollo to take a proactive approach to GDPR compliance; filtering out redundant data during the migration, and building data retention workflows to ensure the correct information is automatically disposed of at the right time.

Transformational tools

Using Voice of the Customer for Dynamics 365, an application for creating online surveys, information and feedback can be gathered from customers and automatically added to the CRM.

For example, Apollo has now automated its passport information collection processes; a crucial requirement for around 70,000 travellers per year, with the ability to automatically pass them to relevant partners, including local authorities, hotels and airlines, to ensure seamless travel. Previously a manual process, with customers prompted to contact Apollo's Contact Centres and provide information before departure, chasing missing details was a time-consuming task. However, since moving to the cloud, Apollo can automatically send the traveller an email after a booking has been made with a link to provide their details, which automatically creates a passport record against their booking.

"Using workflows, we can automatically check at a specified number of days before departure that all passport details have been provided," Says Johnny. "If they haven't, we can send an automatic reminder via email. We will then track whether the email has been opened within a number of hours and, if not, send another reminder via SMS."

This single improvement alone has reduced manual processes carried out by Apollo staff by more than 95%. Equivalent to around 2.5 full-time employees. "We reduced our manual processes by 95% without writing a single line of code and with absolutely zero monetary investment," says Johnny. "We simply utilised the standard Dynamics 365 tools."

And Voice of the Customer has provided additional benefits too, helping Apollo to reduce the number of systems it uses for customer surveys and web forms, and migrating them to the CRM, essentially removing the cost of four pay monthly subscription services.

A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT

1. 90% of Apollo's staff make use of the new CRM on a day-to-day basis, in office locations and on site at destinations.
2. Apollo moved all of its 128 business processes to the cloud and was able to reduce the number of systems it used. Additionally, new features and extended functionality have enabled faster implementation of new business processes.
3. Apollo's 298GB CRM database was migrated to Dynamics 365 using a 1-to-1 upgrade paradigm.

Planning for the future

As Apollo continues to use the cloud to enhance its processes, new ways of gathering and harnessing data are being introduced. Complaint handling, medical certificates and GDPR consents among others will now be collected and stored within the CRM and, as the company's data becomes more integrated, it has begun to look to the future.

"The key is to make the data workable and usable," says Johnny. "That's definitely where we're going. We want to be much more data-driven in all our processes."

Using Dynamic 365 and pooling its data, Apollo can ensure that everyone throughout the business has the same customer view. By providing ways for customers to input information in many of these situations, a wide range of manual processes have become automated. As a result, Apollo can provide a higher level of customer service, with greater context provided to every employee in relation to the customer journey.

"We are doing data exports to an Azure database, and combining this with data from other systems, to enable us to obtain enhanced insights," says Gustaf. "We check that we are marketing to the right people and that we are putting our marketing money in the right places."

The near future will also see Apollo taking advantage of machine learning and other cognitive features of Microsoft Azure; to start visualising patterns from its data, harnessing the flexibility of the cloud without the need for additional investment. Apollo is looking to trial and implement AI-based data analysis to further improve the way it operates.

From a business perspective, Apollo's team believes the opportunities the cloud affords are what warrant the investment, alongside the productivity enhancements it can deliver.

Gustaf agrees and believes Apollo's journey is proof that the cloud should be a consideration for any business: "I would recommend working with a cloud-first mentality," he says. "It's not that tricky to upgrade. It's not as hard as people think it is."

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Johnny Nilsson, Customer Insight Manager, Apollo



Digital transformation to:

- Empower employees
- Engage customers
- Optimise operations
- Transform product
- Transform business

Partner: CRM-Konsulterna, Avega Group
Partner website: www.crmkonsulterna.se,
www.avegagroup.se

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