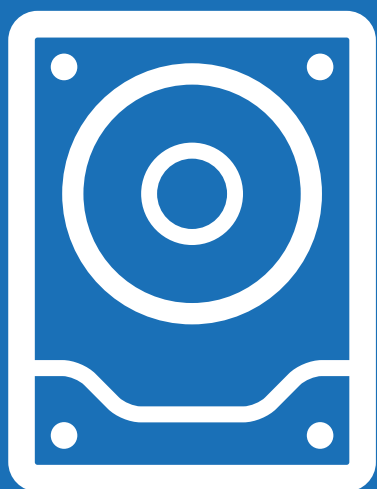# WHITE PAPER

RE-ENERGISING YOUR BUSINESS WITH BIG DATA

prodware

Create and deploy IT solutions for business

Re-energising your business with Big Data

It's a hot topic, but what exactly is Big Data? It's a topic regarded as the domain of multinationals and governments, but should more SMEs take an interest?

Big Data is about both the volume of information and the speed at which it's created. It now takes us two days to create what once took us 200,000 years and the speed at which we create data is likely to triple over the next year.

The advance of big data is partly down to the low cost of computer hardware over recent decades, which means that companies have access to rapidly increasing processor and network speeds, as well as much more storage space. But the data itself is generated by the gadgets and gizmos we use. People have their tablets, laptops and smartphones switched on all the time, both pushing data out and sucking it in. So the volume of data is growing encouraged by the variety and speed of collation tools.

Big Data is big news – the harvesting, analysis and exploitation of accessible information, in order to maximise business performance brings to the fore some of the biggest commercial insights of recent years. Research by investigative technology giant Gartner found that only 10 to 15 per cent of organisations are taking advantage of the big data available to them – and that these are outperforming their competition by around 20 per cent.

But where is the significance to the SME, whose day to day challenges make the relevancy of Big Data look light years away? The point is that for most businesses they have information vital to the decisions they make on an hour by hour, day by day basis, locked away in the systems they use to produce their invoices, buy their products and run the year end accounts. It's locked away because older ERP systems make data hard to access and therefore analyse in a speedy fashion that could be relevant to the immediacy of the decision they need to make. Releasing this data and using it to take the guessing game out of business decisions is the key to adding the value of Big Data to SMEs.

Many people see targeted advertising as intrusive. But it's difficult to argue with its effectiveness when it comes to SMEs getting their message to specific audiences.

Imagine a big company optimising daily marketing spend using worldwide sales and advertisement data, or a small online retailer that makes product recommendations based on user clicks.

But you don't need to be a multinational household name to get involved. Using existing customer data to predict which customers are more likely to spend money and on what product range allows tailored smaller, more carefully targeted campaigns to fewer clients. Acquisition costs fall, while revenue increases.

THE CHALLENGE FOR SMES

It's difficult to predict just how huge big data will become. It will make marketing a more exact science. Marketers will target their customers much more accurately and therefore cost-effectively.

Businesses will use Big Data more and more in admin, logistics and supply chains to make themselves more efficient. And, it'll all be accelerated by the growth of the internet – increasing communication with customers and prospects via social media, collection of data on mobile devices such as smart phones which many employees already live out their lives on.

In short, SMEs must get in on the big-data act. And the best way to do so? Making sure that the systems that currently run the business are both collecting the data and making it easily accessible. In fact with the most recent versions of ERP software they are designed not only to make data accessible but to deliver the key indicators to your desktop as they happen. With the use of dashboards and alerts the days of scanning pages of reports can be behind the small business owner. This creates much more time to run the business with accurate and readily available information.

Data which is already being entered into a system can be captured more efficiently and used more effectively. What's certain is that a passive approach will cause companies to get left behind. You only need to think back 10 years to the rise of websites, or brands today not being mobile-friendly. They will need to do so too in order to compete.

How this can be achieved is demonstrated in the latest releases of Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2013. This release builds on the value of Microsoft Dynamics NAV as a business solution from Microsoft that is quick to implement, easy to use, and with the power to support your business ambitions.

Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2013 portrays Microsoft's long-term commitment to the small and midsized customers, adding significant new value in a number of areas.

Great interoperability with Office 365 breaks down the walls between business data and how people get work done. Microsoft Dynamics NAV can now be deployed as an application to on-premises and cloud-based SharePoint sites, with single sign on and a consistent look and feel across the Microsoft Dynamics NAV Web client and Office 365. Deeper data integration capabilities will enable customers to extend Microsoft Dynamics NAV business processes with SharePoint workflows and Web parts, and take full advantage of Microsoft Excel and the Excel Web App.

Enhanced cash management capabilities will help customers better manage risk and drive business growth with features such as automatic and manual payment processing, bank reconciliation tools, and support for SEPA direct debit and credit transfer.

Powerful usability enhancements across both the Web and desktop clients make Microsoft Dynamics NAV even simpler to use and faster to deploy. A restyled user experience aligned with Office 365 makes it even easier for people to access, view and edit business data and processes.

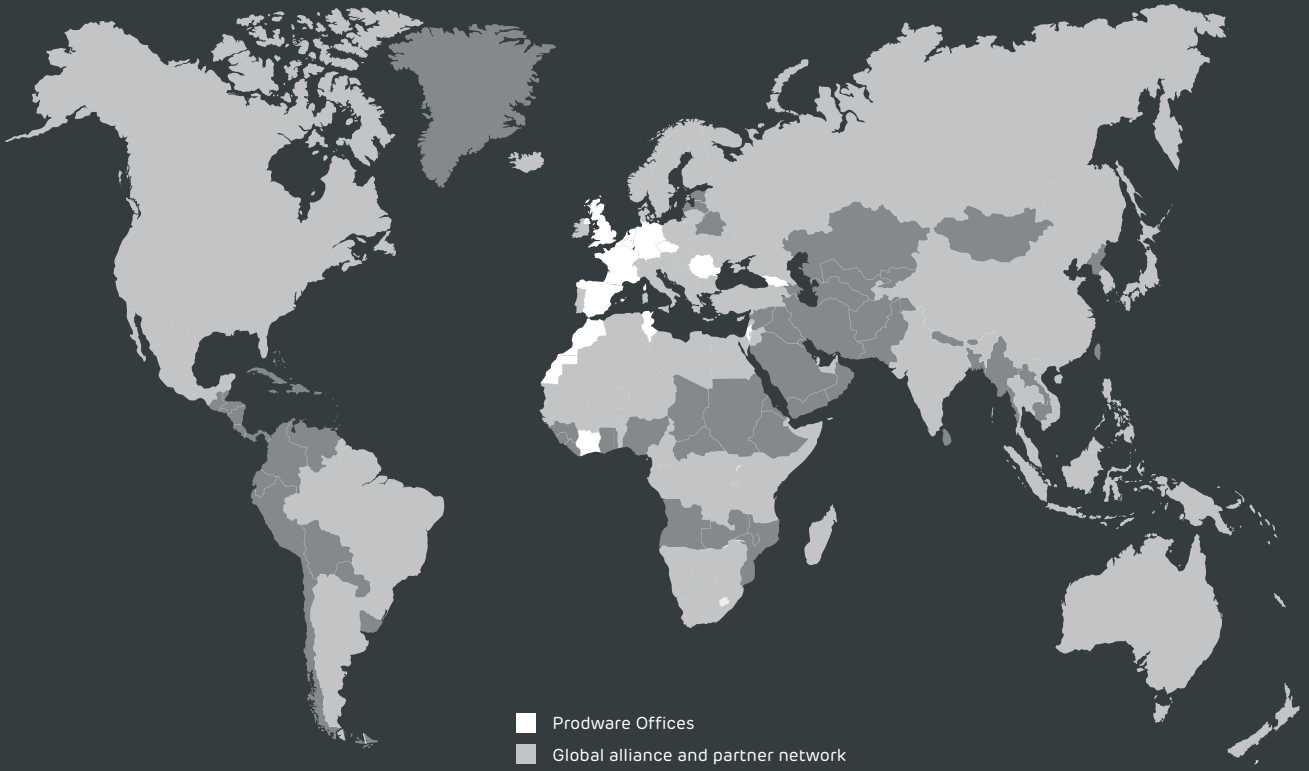## WHAT DOES THE ALIGNMENT WITH OFFICE 365 MEAN FOR THE BUSINESS USER?

Imagine you have a user interface which shows you a KPI in the form of a chart with relevant Office documents, and a list of sales orders. The source of the data that sits behind this is transparent to the user but draws together relevant data from Excel, Word and Dynamics NAV. Structured and unstructured data sit side by side providing the complete picture.

Consider this again from the business impact an upgrade or new business system would have had in the past. Most people are familiar with Office and how to use its interface. Therefore moving to this as a standard method of entering data reduces the investment of time and money retraining employees. Office365 comes with a feature that includes editing item and customer information, generating a sales order and turning it into an invoice. The accounting requirements are handled smoothly in the background. Added to this the value of the data you release into the business decision process which delivers identifiable and lasting benefit.

The true value of Big Data to the SME is that their own Big Data is there, currently hidden within out-dated and disparate systems, ready to be accessed and applied to all sorts of new things it hasn't been applied it to in the past. Upgrading now opens up the world of additional data collection via smart devices, data sources such as social media and methods of accessing and collating information vital to the strategic business decisions that don't mean duplication or expensive reinvestments.

Prodware's global coverage

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