



YOU AINT SEEN NOTHING YET, THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO MICROSOFT

Last week, the Realdolmen-Gfi team left for Las Vegas to head to the annual Microsoft partner conference – Microsoft Inspire. Vegas is hot this time of the year, 43°C. This may not be the perfect type of weather to visit the city, but it is ideal weather for staying in air-conditioned meeting rooms and that’s exactly what we did. We have been amazed and inspired, and it wouldn’t be fair to keep that to ourselves.

We have attended quite a few sessions over the past few days. We had some great talks with Microsoft domain experts and we attended Satya Nadella’s key note in the T-Mobile arena. Microsoft has taken some strategic decisions and directions in the past that are now bringing added value to customers at an exponential pace.

It all started years ago with Azure, the foundation for today’s innovation capabilities. The Azure platform has grown from a cloud data and infra platform to a complete package that serves as an engine for all initiatives. Whether it is home for the Office 365 and D365 applications, for the single source of truth data for PowerBi or for replenishment planning in D365, it’s all on Azure. This strategy is now showing capabilities that a lot of other software companies can only dream of. Smart move of Microsoft to move everything to the cloud, not only from a perspective of keeping customers. It now gives Microsoft the capability to bring innovations to the market quickly, integrate all applications easily on both the frontend and backend.

By the way, the last few day we wished that airlines and airports would have used such an integrated platform because our luggage went missing. It was unclear where our luggage was at a certain point. Still in Brussels? Chicago? It was certainly not in Vegas. Anyhow, after a few days it was delivered to our hotel thanks to a manual search by the airline company.

It’s impossible to give you all details of the things we’ve learned but we would like to share with you what we believe makes the difference.



AI, AI, AI ...no it does not hurt

Artificial Intelligence was the subject of the conference. In every presentation, product roadmap or demo, Microsoft showed real-life AI capabilities. Capabilities for everyday use such as instant translation, product recognition from images, most likely next buy prediction, air quality simulation or presentation rehearsal aid.

Microsoft is adding AI to all its products thanks to the Azure platform that hosts these AI services and datasets. 2019 is certainly the year of democratization for AI at Microsoft. This is something we all can and will benefit from in the coming months, both in a visible and invisible way. Microsoft managed to get AI out of the R&D sphere and into their products. They are way ahead of the competition here.

Power to the people

Another striking trend is the Power platform. It all started with PowerBI a few years ago. A user-friendly UX to present data. This platform is now widely used to present complex data in an easy but powerful way. Microsoft has added PowerApp capabilities to all its cloud products. A PowerApp enables the fast creation of scalable apps that help users to increase productivity. And the good news...every user can build them quickly after a certain amount of training. You do not need to be a certified developer.

Microsoft expects that more PowerApps will be developed over the coming year than applications in the last 40 years. This is a bold statement by Satya but we have no reason to doubt his vision. His Azure vision also became a reality. The same is true for Microsoft Flow – the workflow engine that seamlessly integrates workflows and approval cycles in all M365 applications.

Dynamics 365 – the cloud business productivity platform

The suffering of integrating your business applications is over. Microsoft's cloud-based business applications platform integrates at its core the different business information and processes of your organization. No this is not a nice marketing slogan, but a reality. Thanks to CDS, common data services, all business application like finance & operations, sales and marketing or supply chain seemingly integrate data and processes. This reduces the cost of integration and total cost of ownership but also provides a very scalable model to build your business apps on. D365 has been tuned and tweaked to provide a very complete, yet modular platform.

We all (will) have Teams

The adaption of Teams in the collaboration and communication market was tremendous last year. It was Microsoft's fastest growing platform. Not surprisingly when you see the capabilities of this platform. Teams will be further extended with integrations and will also receive AI features. With Teams, Microsoft wants to further improve day to day productivity, collaboration and communication.

In conclusion, the speed at which Microsoft is changing the business platform market is spectacular. Quick time-to-market of new technological capabilities is beneficial for many businesses. We need to get used to it as the Microsoft plane is at cruising speed. Interesting times for both our customers and us, with more to follow in the coming weeks.