



Epicor Insights 2018: DX Shaping Customers' Journey

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IDC's Quick Take

Epicor's Insights 2018 conference enabled more than 3,000 customer attendees to engage with Epicor and fine-tune their digital transformation (DX) journey. The new alignment with Microsoft Azure, multitenant cloud enablement in distribution and manufacturing, and investment in mobile, IoT, analytics, and quick start tools to the cloud are inspiring Epicor customers. Current clients are recognizing they can kick start their DX journey with Epicor regardless of where they start from on-premises systems to hybrid and finally cloud.

Announcement Highlights

The sections that follow provide the announcements made at Epicor Insight 2018.

Microsoft Azure

[Epicor announced an expanded strategic partnership with Microsoft](#) to deliver Epicor enterprise-class solutions globally on the Microsoft Azure platform. Epicor will initially standardize cloud deployment of its Epicor ERP and Epicor Prophet 21 enterprise resource planning (ERP) suites on Microsoft Azure, empowering customers to drive faster growth and innovation as they move to digitally transform their businesses. Epicor sees this move as a way to focus on the intelligent cloud. Epicor will leverage a range of Azure technologies including Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML) to deliver ready-to-use, right-sized solutions for midmarket manufacturers and distributors. Epicor also plans to explore Microsoft's technologies for advanced search, speech to text, and other use cases to deliver modern human-machine interfaces that improve productivity for its customers.

New UX for the Cloud: Epicor Kinetic Design

Epicor unveiled its product vision for the next generation of user interface (UI) technology and design and industry cloud platforms it believes will enable customers and partners to embrace cloud, Internet of Things, mobility, predictive analytics, and other emerging technologies.

Epicor Kinetic Design is a three-pronged common cross-platform user experience (UX) framework comprised of Epicor Kinetic Design, Epicor Kinetic Framework, and Epicor Kinetic applications.

Epicor Kinetic Design is a set of new user experience guidelines and patterns for building applications for Epicor solutions. Delivering unified colors, typography and icons, user interface elements, and page layouts, Epicor Kinetic Design empowers partners to deliver value-added solutions consistent with Epicor usability best practices and interaction guidelines to enhance customer experience.

Epicor Kinetic Framework embodies Epicor Kinetic Design principles and lives as a website accessible by approved Epicor partners and customers. They have access to sample code and tutorials, a UI component code library, API documentation, and actual code, all with web-native and responsive design — working seamlessly on desktop, tablet, or mobile.

An Epicor Kinetic application is any application that is coded to Kinetic Design standards.

New Alliance ISV Partner Program, Solution Gallery, and Developer Hub

This new program focuses on delivering innovative solutions to Epicor customers tapping into the expertise of the Alliance ISV partner ecosystem. This focus will bring innovative technology solutions from a host of providers to Epicor customers. The new program is designed to simplify the way Epicor engages, manages, and helps its Alliance ISV partner ecosystem tap into the latest technology advances and growing market demand for Epicor products.

In addition, Alliance ISV Partners will receive a wealth of resources and support to help grow their Epicor business opportunities. The program features a comprehensive developer enablement hub, training, solution certification program, and marketing support that will provide partners significant opportunities to grow their business based upon the Epicor product platform.

New Management Team

It was pleasing to see the energy within the Epicor management team, the new CEO, Steve Murphy, who has been on board for about 8 months has instilled a new wave of enthusiasm among the management team, which is now a mixture of seasoned Epicor personnel and new blood coming in from outside.

Industry Solutions

The blurring of industry lines was a subtheme running through the conference, with the idea that no company sits solely in a manufacturing, retail, or distributor bucket. Epicor was keen to share how it was enabling customers to blur the lines with additional functionality, enabling say a manufacturer to offer online ecommerce services. This will be widely appreciated by the customer base, allowing them to explore/expand into new business areas without having to implement a new system.

In addition, IDC is finding that more and more users want to deep dive into niche vertical-specific issues and understand the technologies that can help them address those issues.

Globalization

Epicor is committed to continuing to expand internationally based on investing in the channel and strengthening the existing customer base. However, with more and more midsize companies operating globally, the requirement for support will continue to grow. With the message of ERP as the foundation of digital transformation, this will certainly appeal to manufacturers across the globe, and with the new alliance program in place, there may be significant upside for Epicor in global markets.

Epicor University

The update of the Epicor University was a welcome announcement, with new knowledge on demand support, allowing users in a specific screen to access quick and direct help videos around one minute in length, which is in addition to the longer training videos that are around seven minutes in length. It was also pleasing to hear the introduction of certification, and also partnering programs with universities. This professional training support should help address some of the issues around the shortage of workers in the manufacturing sector that was highlighted at the event.

Customers

The theme of Epicor that permeated the event was "Fit, Ease, Growth." Certainly, the customers who spoke to IDC at the event felt that this mantra was being effectively put into practice. Much was made of the "simplicity" of the Epicor suite of products in both implementation and usability, and with the new Epicor Kinetic Design approach, this will continue to be the same.

It was also interesting to see the use of Epicor ERP as the foundation for customers' DX journeys. Highlights include:

- The London Electric Vehicle Company (LEVC), using Epicor as the backbone of a future factory initiatives, coordination of multiple robots in the assembly of electric London taxis
- Rainier Industries, implementing a configure to order system, allowing dealers to configure accurately their orders which enabled improved customer experience and a shortening of lead times
- FLSmith, a global supplier of equipment and services to the global cement and minerals industries, talking about its ease of implementation of Epicor ERP version 10
- Wipaire Inc., a midsize global supplier of aerospace services and parts, sharing its use of ERP as a backbone to the next stage of transformation

Epicor was keen to point out that digital transformation is a theme that is impacting companies of all sizes, with which IDC agrees, and the demonstration on stage of stock count using a drone and a haptic glove for scanning products.

IDC's Point of View

IDC was pleased to see Epicor making a full pivot and embracing the DX strategy assisting clients on their quest to the digital age. From clients that have been stuck with outdated legacy on-premises systems to a hybrid approach to cloud, it is clear Epicor is fully engaged helping its clients on the DX journey.

With more than half of the customer base using Epicor on-premises solutions, Epicor has identified tools, technologies, and other mechanisms to assist its clients on their journey beyond legacy systems. Tools that help clients identify the version levels, enhancements that have been missed and then assisting them with automated migration to the cloud are going a long way keeping Epicor clients focused on Epicor.

While the migration to SaaS continues to pick up for Epicor, it does expect more and continued value to come from hybrid models in the next few years. The push is on to become digital and that means converting your back-office ERP, manufacturing, distribution, and retail systems into the DX economy. At last year's conference, Epicor announced the distribution side is cloud ready, and retail will be there is expected to be there quickly as well. Mobile, IoT, analytics, AI, and machine learning are all part of the journey the customers want.

While Epicor knows its customer base well, it needs to convert them to a hybrid or cloud model without losing them to SaaS-only ERP systems that are commonplace today. Only time will tell, however, we are betting on Epicor to keep its base while adding new clients quickly.

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