



# Azure™ Services Platform



**Partner:** Epicor

**Web Site:** [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com)

**Partner Size:** 3,000 employees

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** IT services

#### Partner Profile

Based in Irvine, California, Epicor develops enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solutions for small to midsize companies. Epicor has more than 3,000 employees in 50 offices around the world.

#### Software and Services

- Software-Plus-Services
  - Azure Services Platform
  - Windows Azure
  - Microsoft .NET Services
  - Microsoft SQL Services
- Technologies
  - Microsoft .NET Framework

For more information on the Azure Services Platform, please visit [www.azure.com](http://www.azure.com)

## Software Developer Saves Money, Enhances Application with Internet-Based Platform

“Azure really provides another dimension to software as a service for our customers... it means software that they own and manage, without having to sign up with an online provider or employ a large IT staff of their own.”

Erik Johnson, Senior Director of Product Research, Epicor

*Epicor is a provider of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solutions to customers worldwide. The organization recently sought to meet customer demands for lower-cost, Internet-based ERP solutions. To do that, Epicor developed a new ERP application using the Azure™ Services Platform, a new Microsoft cloud-based development platform. With Azure, the company can cut costs, provide a range of Internet-based services, and extend existing developer skills, all to deliver better experiences to customers.*

#### Business Needs

Epicor, headquartered in Irvine, California, provides integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP) software solutions to more than 20,000 customers in 140 countries. Founded in 1984, Epicor is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and the world's sixth-largest independent software vendor. The organization, which has more than 3,000 employees who work in 50 global offices, had revenues of U.S.\$429 million in fiscal year 2007.

Epicor solutions, built on the Microsoft .NET Framework, are specifically targeted to small and midsize manufacturing, distribution, retail, and hospitality companies. “Our applications help customers reduce operational costs by keeping inventory levels low and moving the supply chain,” says Erik Johnson, Senior Director of Product Research, Epicor.

Recently, Epicor has sought to respond to customer demands for reliable, cost-



effective Internet-based applications that also connect with on-premise ERP capabilities. "Our customers are seeking easy-to-use online applications that they can deploy and control, so they can effectively manage supply-chain operations," says Johnson. "There are some Web sites that provide that today, but users typically have to sign up and pay fees for those services and then encourage their business partners to follow suit. And even though companies can create their own Web sites to do this, they still have to manage user identities across multiple enterprises. Every single supply-chain user needs to be managed by an IT staff, which is expensive and time-consuming for our customers."

Epicor wanted to find a development environment for building an application that could meet these customer requirements.

## Solution

In June 2008, Epicor was given the opportunity to evaluate the Azure™ Services Platform, a new Microsoft cloud-computing platform for developing and deploying software solutions on the Internet.

Azure features an Internet-based operating system, developer tools, and Web services designed to aid existing applications or run new Internet-based applications and services. This new technology also offers a suite of services that can be used in development, including file storage, identity services, access control, workflow, and a distributed database. Organizations like Epicor can create their own services or run an entire application in the Azure cloud, paying for only the services and capacity they need.

Shortly after its introduction to Azure, Epicor decided to migrate Epicor Enterprise Search, an Internet search experience application included with its ERP suite. The application implements search functionality using indexes and data uploaded to an Internet-based storage service. The existing solution uses Microsoft SQL Server® data management software and the Microsoft

.NET Framework 3.5, and includes Web capabilities. To migrate the search application to Azure, Epicor replaced the SQL Server portion of the application with Azure data services. Epicor then was able to fully host the application using Azure after making a few additional tweaks. "Because this application is developed and managed on Azure, our customers can get an Internet search experience for their critical business data more easily and without requiring additional internal servers outside the firewall," says Johnson.

Epicor plans to make the Azure-enabled version of Epicor Enterprise Search available soon after Azure is made generally available.

## Benefits

By developing its new ERP application on the Azure Services Platform, Epicor was able to lower its development costs, offer its customers Internet-based services, and build on its developers' familiarity with the Microsoft .NET Framework.

- **Lowers costs.** Using Azure, Epicor developers were able to build Epicor Enterprise Search on the Internet, without having to worry about the complexity of building out data center environments. "Azure is not just a managed operating system," Johnson says. "It's a development environment for deploying .NET applications directly onto the Internet. As a result, the development overhead is much lower than it would be with managed services. That helps save a lot of money in the development process." The cloud-based model also reduces operational costs for users of Epicor Enterprise Search. "Azure really provides another dimension to software as a service for our customers," says Johnson. "In this case, it means software that they own and manage, without having to sign up with an online provider or employ a large IT staff of their own."
- **Provides Internet-based services.** With the Microsoft .NET Access Control

Service, Epicor Enterprise Search users receive a single identity infrastructure for use both inside and outside domains. "Our customers want applications that their users can easily access, without the need to set up accounts for all the supply-chain partners using the application," Johnson says. "Azure provides that capability." Epicor can also use Azure to publish the application's search indexes in the cloud, so remote users do not have to run the application on a laptop or mobile device. "Remote users can easily access the indexes without having to use a virtual private network to get into the system," Johnson says. "That really simplifies things."

### ■ Builds on existing IT investments.

Epicor can also extend its existing investment in Microsoft technology, because Azure gives developers familiar with the .NET Framework the opportunity to use their knowledge to develop or extend either on-premise or cloud-based applications. "This environment really takes advantage of our developers' existing .NET skills and experience," confirms Johnson. "As a result, we were able to very easily migrate the application to the Azure environment." Due to the fact that Azure takes advantage of existing developer skills, Epicor was able to build and deploy Epicor Enterprise Search more quickly. "Overall, we can better program our software solutions to offer our customers higher service-level agreements because of Azure," Johnson says.