



Case Study

AsahiKASEI
ASAHI KASEI PHARMA

**Avanade helps
Asahi Kasei Pharma with
“Avanade Flexible Support” to
transform its operations
through citizen development**

Do what matters

Inspiring change

As a company within the Asahi Kasei Group, Asahi Kasei Pharma Corporation is engaged in the manufacturing and sales of pharmaceutical products. According to Mr. Taku Ishiwa, IT & BPR Dept., the organization sets its digital strategy with a commitment to developing digital talent across the Asahi Kasei Group. Employees across each company within the group can voluntarily participate in educational content and acquire digital qualifications. The certification for these qualifications is managed on the “Open Badge” platform, which displays employees’ skills.

Despite these innovation efforts encouraging employees to obtain digital qualifications, leaders recognized the need to fill the gaps in the company’s capabilities and decided to focus on citizen development. By using [Microsoft Power Platform](#), they aimed to solve business challenges and deliver outcomes by training employees to proactively and voluntarily develop applications to accelerate business innovation.

The company decided to launch a community initiative called “The Power Platform Dojo” ahead of the rest of the group. Regarding this concept, Mr. Ishiwa explains: “Rather than writing code and developing applications extensively, the goal was to train the operationally proficient workforce to have a certain level of digital knowledge and mindset, enabling them to keep up with digital trends.”

The Power Platform Dojo was scheduled to kick off in January 2023, but there was a shortfall in IT training. As a result, vendor selection for training expertise began in winter 2022.

“When it came to setting up the community and training citizen developers, we did not have the knowledge or expertise for Power Platform, making it essential to partner with experts in training.”

– Mr. Taku Ishiwa
IT & BPR Department, Asahi Kasei Pharma Corporation

Driving innovation

The partner selection process involved comparing multiple vendors, including Avanade. “What we were looking for in a partner was educational content that we could use immediately and that addressed our business challenges,” says Mr. Ishiwa. “After interviewing several vendors, primarily in the IT space, we found that the proposal from Avanade had the most consulting elements. While other vendors mainly proposed standardized training menus, Avanade listened to our needs and provided flexible proposals that addressed our challenges.”

Company Name: Asahi Kasei Pharma Corporation

Country: Japan

Company Size: ~47,000 employees

Industry: Life Sciences

Solution: Microsoft Power Platform

Avanade proposed unique training content by leveraging Avanade Flexible Support that could contribute to Asahi Kasei Pharma’s business, addressing a wide range of requests, including training in Microsoft Power Platform.

Avanade Flexible Support is a service that helps organizations solve their problems and challenges through a time-based billing system. The contracted hours can be utilized for a combination of workshops aimed at problem-solving, practical training on Power Platform, and pre- and post-implementation support.

Regarding the aim of the proposal, Aya Shimazu from Avanade explains: “From our experience supporting multiple clients, we felt that simply providing training was not enough. There were still significant hurdles for participants to overcome when they returned to their tasks to solve actual problems.”

Avanade highlighted a key value in this proposal: the expert assistance provided as post-training support, which included answering participants’ questions and accompanying them until their knowledge was firmly established.

This tailored proposal for their challenges was the deciding factor, leading the organization to leverage Avanade Flexible Support for assistance. Avanade provided a cycle of support, from basic training to application building, to solve their real-world issues, starting in February 2023.

The support mainly included Microsoft Power Platform training for both beginners and intermediate users, as well as individual Q&A consultation sessions. “For beginners, the training focused on simple operational training to understand what Power Platform can do. For intermediate users, the goal was to develop features that address specific tasks in more business-related scenarios,” says Mr. Ishiwa.

To build educational content, Avanade prepared the beginner-level content in advance, while the intermediate-level content was created from scratch through discussions between both companies.

Considering that mere functional explanations were not sufficient for learners to grasp the content, Avanade designed the flow and materials in a way that allowed the operational staff to utilize tools to bring their ideas to life for improved operations.

This approach ensured that non-IT members could intuitively understand system thinking and implementation skills, and fully absorb the content without feeling uncomfortable. Avanade continuously revised the content based on the company’s reviews to achieve this.

“Although the training was conducted alongside regular operations, we ensured that participants had fixed training times and attended it beside their regular routines,” says Mr. Ishiwa. “If they struggled to understand, we scheduled a weekly session to work together.”

Mr. Ishiwa also supported the participants with meticulous follow-ups. He continues, “It was challenging for participants to continue training alone while managing their routines, making citizen development difficult. For this reason, I realized that Microsoft Power Platform is a tool that allows people without IT expertise or programming skills to solve their business problems.”

Training itself began in February 2023, and was conducted entirely in three sessions until December 2023, with a total of approximately 40 participants. The attendees came from various departments, including sales planning and management, research, manufacturing and administration. For the invitation process, Mr. Ishiwa explains that they assigned training coordinators in each department, who conducted open invitations to encourage volunteers to participate.

The first round was performed as a test, and the team made enhancements in the second and third rounds based on the lessons learned. For example, in the first round, they did not actively seek commitment from the participants’ supervisors. However, it became clear that time allocation, motivation and the output of the participants were affected, so they encouraged supervisors to agree in advance for the staff to participate in the training. These efforts increased the quality and satisfaction of the training.

Achieving what matters

One example of a deliverable is the Call Handler’s app, used by the sales team. Previously, when pharmacies or other clients inquired about pharmaceuticals or placed orders for materials, the office staff received the call, looked up the phone number and found the sales representative to send an email, since they did not have a call management system.

This process has now been streamlined via the app. Now, the salesperson’s name is displayed on the screen based on the facility name when a call is received. The call taker can input and register the relevant materials, then an email is automatically sent to the responsible representative. Additionally, the app allows for tracking response history and managing statuses.

This resulted in benefits such as reducing the workload, minimizing errors and improving response speeds of office staff, which in turn enhanced customer satisfaction.

“Among the apps we developed, some are expected to reduce manual effort by as much as 20 hours, with the most significant reductions up to 1,200 hours.”

**– Mr. Taku Ishiwa
IT & BPR Department, Asahi Kasei Pharma Corporation**

Mr. Ishiwa highlights three key success outcomes of the collaboration with Avanade:

- Cultivation of talent necessary to drive citizen development: As participants created and implemented apps, awareness of the tools spread within the company, increasing recognition and awareness among employees that they can address their own business challenges through apps.
- Knowledge and proven experience in citizen development: Despite being a short-term initiative, employees were able to create professional-level apps to showcase internally as achievements. This allowed the team to build knowledge and proven experience in operating The Power Platform Dojo as part of its DX efforts.
- The lead Asahi Kasei Pharma can take to encourage people the use of low-code/no-code tools across the entire Asahi Kasei Group: At the group’s IT showcase, the team shared their achievements, which, according to Mr. Ishiwa, enhanced citizen development practices across the entire group.

“Integrating citizen development into our business requires significant effort, time and cost,” says Mr. Ishiwa. “It would have been difficult without the support of Avanade.”

He adds that by achieving small successes, dedicated citizen developers in each department would be ideal — expressing his ambition for steady progress toward this goal.

“For group companies and other enterprises facing challenges in organizational DX, Power Platform would be a tool suitable for improving on-site operations,” he says. “It would be meaningful for operational members to act by first assessing their current processes, then actually creating an app. Once an app is created, data will accumulate, leading to data visualization and subsequent initiatives, including generative AI.”

CASE STUDY

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The partnership with Avanade ended in July 2024. “We have accumulated a sufficient amount of internal knowledge,” says Mr. Ishiwa. “In the next phase, we would like to seek further support when advancing top-down initiatives or when new technologies emerge.”

He expresses his desire for Avanade to continue providing ongoing advice and insights with its deep knowledge and proven experience in Microsoft technology, ensuring the synergistic effects of Microsoft’s indispensable tools to keep Asahi Kasei Pharma’s operations running efficiently.

“We developed The Call Handler’s app to reduce the workload of administrative staff. It was time-consuming to receive calls and email the relevant staff, and the process was felt like an invisible chore. We also created a mobile version by considering the convenience for salespeople. The app has been widely embraced, which was a great achievement. In Dojo, we generally create applications by researching on our own, but the detailed support provided by Mr. Ishiwa was invaluable when we were stuck in the process. We hope to continue contributing to operational efficiency utilizing Power Platform.”

– Chika Nakamura

Sales Planning & Control Department, Asahi Kasei Pharma Corporation

About Asahi Kasei Pharma Corp.

As a company within the Asahi Kasei Group, Asahi Kasei Pharma is engaged in the manufacturing and sales of prescription drugs, diagnostic reagents, and enzymes for diagnostic reagents. The common desire of people around the world is to lead healthy, bright, and comfortable lives. With our mission, “to sincerely care for each individual life and solve their unmet medical needs with a wealth of ideas and solid science,” Asahi Kasei Pharma aims to realize a society where “no one should have to give up doing what they love due to illness.”

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About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 60,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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