Case Study
Client: itSMF UK

sol-tec
CLOUD EMPOWERED SOLUTIONS

Leading UK membership forum moves to the cloud for more reliable communication and connection
By Ben Clacy, Chief Executive, itSMF UK.

Overview

Location
UK

Industry
Not-for-Profit

Services Provided
Forum and industry information source advising on best practice IT service management

Website
www.itsmf.co.uk

Business Needs

itSMF UK is the founding chapter of the independent and internationally recognised IT Service Management forum. We serve a UK community of 9,500 members who are the centre of our business; supporting them to deliver best practice IT service management is our core focus.

We do this by providing an accessible network of industry experts, information sources, events and best practice content to help them address IT service management issues and deliver high quality IT service internally and externally.

As the founding chapter, we also provide guidance to the 53 chapters around the world to help them become established and operate successfully.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we are run by a voluntary board of members and a relatively small core office team of 8. A further 50-60 volunteers lead our engagement with the membership and deliver the full range of content and activities we provide. They are a critical part of the service and value our members receive. As a membership organization it's vital we continually enhance communication with

members and facilitate effortless knowledge transfer. Until recently, our IT was not helping us to deliver that vision.

Like many organisations, the infrastructure had become progressively dated and ineffective over the years. It was typical of IT at that time - we had servers in the building and we managed everything in-house. If we needed anything new we'd purchase and install it without any real policy or structure.

With Exchange 2003 running on old hardware for our email and multiple versions of Office, we faced increasing business risk from email outages and growing compatibility problems. Plus, we were conscious that our Exchange server was headed towards 'end of support' in the imminent future.

The technology was simply not reliable and we didn't have the flexibility to properly support staff and our wider team of volunteers. After a period of having IT support in-house, we had decided to outsource it to a third-party company but as the incidents and outages become more regular, that had a serious impact on the business.

Solutions

We enlisted the help of an IT services company, Sol-Tec, who immediately showed us how to take our infrastructure forward and demonstrated what they felt was best for us. With the need to move Exchange onto a stable supported platform and standardise Office across the business, they recommended Office 365 from Microsoft. I didn't want us to do things just because we'd always done them a certain way, and I intuitively felt that a bold new approach would bring us far-reaching benefits. So moving to a cloud environment was exciting and felt like we were investing in something for the future.

Office 365 also gave us an opportunity to provide all board members, and a large proportion of our outreach volunteers, with an itSMF email address which they hadn't had to date. For membership confidence that is very important. The flexibility of the licensing meant we could vary the service packages for different individuals, providing the full suite of applications to those who needed it and just email to those who didn't.

With Sol-Tec at the helm, we swiftly deployed and migrated 41 users onto the new Office 365 environment. Sol-Tec were an extremely supportive, understanding partner in that process. They worked out what we needed and gave us a 'top draw' service to help us achieve it. It all went rather well!

Benefits

Office 365 has changed how we work; every day we learn new ways to complete tasks, communicate and share content more efficiently, and improve our visibility of one another's movements. It's proving itself to be a much more reliable system. We don't get issues anywhere near as often as before and users are no longer frustrated by the limitations of the internal technology.

It's also helping us to be far better connected as a team. We can quickly set up email accounts for new volunteers and that enables the central team to better support them. In turn, our volunteers are able to reach out to the member audience, and other chapters around the world, on a more professional basis. It's helped to bring them close together and that's a very important part of what we do.

So you could say, Office 365 is a good fit for our business!

We're finally demonstrating to the member audience how IT should work, how it can streamline communications and make collaborative working simple and effective.

Now we're up and running, have my expectations been met? Definitely. Office 365 has simplified our business and proven it's just a better way of operating and managing IT from a financial and future proofing perspective. We no longer carry any capital expenditure burden and we're never going to have to worry about a server blowing up which we hadn't budgeted for! The scalability is a real benefit as we add more and more new volunteers and from a budgeting point of view, paying for what we use each month is a much more beneficial model for us.

So, as we look to the future and plan how we continue to enhance member value through new services and improved communication, Office 365 gives us the possibilities we need to achieve that.

Office

- Office 365 is much more than Office in the cloud. It's a package of apps and services that includes Microsoft Office 2016, Skype for Business, and OneDrive for Business.

- Office 365 empowers your employees to work securely from any location on any device. To stay productive anywhere anytime.

- Office 365 puts the user at the hub of your IT. One user license lets your people install Office 365 apps on any five iOS, Windows or Android devices.

- Office 365 gives your business tools like video conferencing and cloud document storage alongside Microsoft Office apps you're familiar with.

- Delivered as a cloud subscription, Office 365 is managed in the cloud and backed-up by extreme built-in security.

- Whether you are a small organisation with limited IT resources or a large organisation with advanced IT needs, Office 365 has solutions optimised for business size and IT needs.