

Microsoft Office 365 reduces costs and boosts flexibility for Wellington consultants

Company: Wellington-based professional services consultancy, The Integral Group.

Problem: Server hardware past its prime.

Solution: Microsoft 365.

Benefits: Systems in tune with work style.



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Like many organisations, Wellington-based professional services consultancy, The Integral Group, has an ongoing requirement for technology systems which are in-tune with the collaboration requirements of the day. However, the pace of change in the information technology industry necessitates repetitive – and at times expensive – upgrades of applications and server hardware which underpins them. Integral Group Director, Frank Aldridge, discovered that by moving to Microsoft Office 365 with the help of IT services provider LANWorx, his business could gain a big boost in mobility and professionalism while saving up to \$15,000 in hardware cost outlays.

Knowledge specialists

Established in 2001, The Integral Group Limited (TIGL) provides specialised consultancy in project management, procurement, negotiation, knowledge management, learning and development, and logistics. With a small group of full time personnel, the organisation's headcount routinely fluctuates as consultants are brought in to fulfil various client projects.

Says Aldridge: "As a consulting company, we bring in project teams and consultants on an 'as and when required' basis. That means we go up and down in terms of the number of people on board at any given time. Furthermore, we often work remotely or from home; personally, I like to work on the move, regularly setting up in coffee shops and so on."

TIGL's core customer segments include corporate New Zealand and central and local government entities, whereby

requiring high level of professionalism across all client interactions. The high degree of competency also extends to collaboration and communication tools TIGL uses internally and with clients.

Aldridge confirms that, like most companies, TIGL seeks to maximise the value of existing technology investments prior to upgrades. Over many years of sitting on the same technology – including Microsoft Office 2007 and Exchange 2003 – it was clear that those solutions were beginning to show their age. More than that, the server hardware in the company offices was also past its prime and at risk of failure. In particular, technological advancements since their previous infrastructure investment meant many of their clients were now using unified communications solutions; integrating video and instant messaging for more effective collaboration, something their own solution couldn't provide.

To modernise their IT environment, TIGL was presented with two options by LANWorx: move into the cloud with Microsoft's Office 365 solution, or buy a new server and on-site software which would require a capital outlay of no less than \$15,000.



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Cloud option a no-brainer

Having been a client of LANWorx for nearly 10 years, Aldridge knew he could trust LANWorx's advice to move to the Cloud and Microsoft 365. "I know Mark and Tony (the owners) and I trust them to do what's best for us, not themselves. They are the kind of company that put our needs over their own."

Aldridge says Office 365 was a "no-brainer" choice for TIGL. In particular, he says the ability to share and store documents in Microsoft SharePoint were appealing.

Hayden Friend, Account Manager at LANWorx, says Office 365 is a great solution for companies like TIGL. "Implementing Office 365 presents very few challenges outside of the necessity for workarounds with other line of business applications which might not yet have cloud versions available. This was the case with TIGL's time and attendance [T&A] solution; however, that was easily resolved."

Aldridge says the performance of the T&A system has received a boost in performance.

Friend says there may be a learning curve for employees of some organisations, but that this is typically dealt with quickly. "It's more a question of a mental paradigm shift that data is just stored in a different place. With decent connectivity in place, accessing work documents and email no matter where the individual might be, quickly becomes a pleasure, as it is done through the familiar interface of Outlook and SharePoint, rather than webmail or other logins. That's the beauty of Office 365."

Aldridge says "LANWorx's implementation of Microsoft 365 was smooth and easy. There was virtually no down time".

Systems in tune with work style

Not having to spend tens of thousands of dollars on new hardware is a significant advantage for any business, agrees Aldridge, but he says there are even better reasons for choosing an Office 365 solution. Among these are flexibility, zero downtime because updates are applied seamlessly by Microsoft, and software which is more in-tune with how he and his employees work. "Having everything in one location – the cloud – which is accessible by everyone, at any time, allows our team to be more mobile. Even when we're in different physical locations, Office 365 allows full collaboration," he confirms.

"When LANWorx implemented Office 365 there was no pain, but a hell of a lot of gain in terms of portability. We really are a mobile organisation now because of it."

Furthermore, flexible licensing means TIGL pays 'just enough' – and no more – for its Office 365 applications. "Flexibility in operating costs is yet another benefit; that just adds to the advantage of not having to spend thousands on a big capital item," says Aldridge.

Something that is surely on the mind of every Kiwi business owner too, is the potential threat of an earthquake. The move to Office 365 provides some assurance of resilience should an earthquake strike, Aldridge notes. "With our old server stuck in the office, a quake could arguably lock us out from our data. It happened to red-zoned business owners in Christchurch; with a cloud solution, this risk all but disappears as we can access our data and continue working so long as we have internet connectivity," he explains.

Such is the success of TIGL's use of Microsoft Office 365 that Aldridge says he has now moved the whole lot to the cloud. "We worked with LANWorx who were able to get us specialist advice for the right type of cloud solutions for a company of our size, budget, and complexity."

"I can trust LANWorx to always act in our best interests and that's been built up over working together for a number of years. I couldn't recommend them enough."

"I trust them to do what's best for us, not themselves. They are the kind of company that put our needs over their own."

Frank Aldridge
Integral Group Director

About LANWorx

LANWorx is an IT services company, providing the full range of software, hardware, system management services and strategic IT advice to SME organisations.

We help your organisation to be its best, by focussing on your core business at maximum productivity, while LANWorx ensures the right IT systems are always in place.

This is based on our strong technical competence, a proactive and common-sense approach, and an absolute commitment to delivery.

We understand IT is a tool to help people do their job better, and that tool should be easy and painless to use. Our promise is always to put people before IT.

LANWorx. People before IT.

Contact us today for a chat about how we can put people before I.T. in your business.

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