

Office 365 Platform Assessment:

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The path to cloud is beset with potential pitfalls, which is why the Selwyn District Council engaged with Insight for an Office 365 Platform Assessment. Through a series of analyses and evaluations, Insight has provided valuable guidance to the local government entity, delivering recommendations that enable Selwyn DC to implement best practices for configuration and security of its Microsoft Office 365 platform.

Headquartered in Rolleston near Christchurch, the Selwyn District Council (Selwyn DC) is the local government authority providing municipal services to a population of more than 60,000 people across 6 towns and a significant area of farmland. The Council has some 410 Microsoft Office 365 users, a number which is set to grow; the Selwyn District is New Zealand's fastest growing over the past decade.

Situation

The New Zealand Government has prioritised the adoption of cloud technologies where possible, and at the same time, Local Councils are naturally progressing towards modern infrastructure and application use. That's according to Selwyn DC Information Services Manager Neil Cookeson.

"With Microsoft Office 365 including SharePoint and Teams, it's really a no-brainer to upgrade from on-premises productivity applications to the cloud-based alternative,"

Moreover, there is a benefit in terms of reduced administrative overhead. "With on-premises deployments, when you install a service pack to fix an issue, you'll find there are multiple potential options for solving various problems which inevitably arise. When you go into the cloud, that just isn't a factor."

For Selwyn DC, the challenge was ensuring the configuration of its Office 365 Platform and supporting infrastructure was robust, secure and met requirements in terms of governance and best practice, ahead of a planned migration from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams Calling.

"However, there is always risk involved in any migration; in our case, we wanted assurance of our Office 365 configuration and security," Cookeson notes.

Solution

As a long-term provider of Microsoft Licensing Services and related consultancy to Selwyn DC, Cookeson says he knew exactly where to go. "We routinely get Insight in to make sure we are appropriately aligned with Microsoft's requirements," he notes. The Office 365 Platform Assessment gives us the additional arms-length view of our internal processes and configuration and helps us to remediate potential issues before they arise."

Suitable for organisations taking their first steps towards an Office 365 implementation or those further down the track, Insight's Office 365 Platform Assessment provides a blueprint for service provisioning with sound security and governance practices.

The Office 365 Platform Assessment includes workshops with key business stakeholders, assessing the IT landscape and current cloud presence, identifying gaps, and making recommendations to bring the deployment to best practice standards.

Results

As part of the engagement, Insight provides a high-level roadmap based on the Council's stated technology goals, to support it on the journey to cloud and a modern workplace.

Cookeson points out that configuration of key services can go out of alignment, particularly if short-term workarounds are made during daily business. "This is effectively avoided with input from the experts," he adds.

Among the results of the most recent Office 365 Platform Assessment were recommendations and remediations to Azure Active Directory configurations, as well as around Office 365 license allocations.

Further guidance included advising the use of 'least privilege' access, Multi-Factor Authentication, blocking legacy authentication, and establishing an effective governance framework to guard future Office 365 workload adoption along with Microsoft 365 Defender integration.

"The value here is huge; if you persistently fail to get this right, there's the risk of data loss, security vulnerabilities and potential for users to have inappropriate levels of access for their roles," Cookeson says.

Ultimately, he says the engagement with Insight is friction-free, while delivering vital results for a de-risked path to value from Microsoft 365. These benefits extend to the infrastructure supporting Selwyn District Council's Office 365 environment, including Azure Active Directory and Office 365 Security.

Rachael Lattimore

Account Manager (S.I.)
Insight Enterprises (NZ) Ltd

+64 9 892 0408

+64 27 707 1525

rachael.lattimore@insight.com

nz.insight.com

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