

Bringing people and information together

How Insight helped Cromwell Property Group consolidate, streamline and secure its technology following a corporate acquisition.



When this Australia-based property firm acquired a new business in Europe, they found themselves with duplicate technology and a need for more rigorous, streamlined identity management. Thankfully, Insight was there to help.

Cromwell Property Group (Cromwell) is a publicly-listed business with headquarters in Australia, and offices around the world. In 2015, they furthered their expansion by acquiring a pan-European commercial real estate platform.

While this acquisition delivered many benefits, it did raise some sizeable technology challenges. Even though members of the new European workforce were already using Microsoft Office 365, the business now had disparate instances of each that required consolidation, particularly from a licensing and services perspective. Cromwell had also inherited an on-premise mail environment which didn't fit with their cloud-first business and IT strategy.

The acquisition also generated new security challenges associated with managing user identities across two separate markets, while simultaneously meeting the compliance requirements of both the Australian Privacy Act and Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

After a few years operating with duplicate technology, Cromwell undertook a rigorous evaluation process before selecting Insight as the partner to help solve their immediate licensing challenges, and to establish a solid technology services foundation for future innovation.

The problem: disparate technology for a global business

For a large, global business with multiple subsidiaries in different markets, technology challenges are not uncommon. For Cromwell – a business that's always prided itself on being ahead of the curve with their innovative use of technology – it was essential that the new European workforce became seamlessly and securely integrated into the new network.

Fortunately, both Cromwell's existing and new European employees were already using Office 365 for day-to-day productivity, communication and collaboration. However, the acquisition meant Cromwell now had two separate instances of the software, which created inefficiencies from a management, licensing and security perspective.

The European team also utilised an on-premise mail environment built on Microsoft Exchange 2010, which Cromwell was very keen to move to the cloud.

"We had two separate instances of Office 365, as well as multiple tenants and multiple agreements with vendors, which was not ideal," said Daniel Dickens, Chief Technology Officer at Cromwell Property Group.

"We needed to bring everything together into a single cloud environment to make it far easier to manage and maintain, as well as give us centralised, cloud-based identity management, which was vital in terms of our overall security," he added.

Cromwell Property Group has operations across three continents, and a global investor base. As of 30 June 2020, they had a market capitalisation of \$2.4 billion, a direct property investment portfolio in Australia valued at \$3 billion, and total assets under management of \$11.5 billion across Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

"Cromwell is very much a cloud-first business. Following the acquisition, we engaged Insight to help us bring this new entity into our existing cloud environment, without disrupting our people's ability to get their work done – wherever they may be."

*Daniel Dickens, CTO
Cromwell Property Group*

The solution: a seamless, stress-free migration

Insight worked very closely with the Cromwell team from the outset to understand its expectations and define the five key requirement goals for this project:

- **Consolidate** the multi-tenant environment into one global tenant.
- **Improve security and compliance** by migrating to a single, easy to manage cloud environment – with data hosted in either Australia or Europe to meet compliance requirements.
- **Amalgamate** the business' disparate Office 365 E3 licensing agreements.
- **Align** multiple licensing agreements under a single, global enterprise agreement.
- **Pave the way for new security measures**, including robust, cloud-based identity management and multi-factor authentication.

Importantly, the entire migration process, as well as the roll-out of new security processes, needed to happen seamlessly, with minimal disruption to users. This was particularly relevant for those working in the European offices, so as to maintain continuity and efficiency across the consolidated organisation.

Insight therefore partnered with Insentra, a collaborative IT professional services partner, to deliver the migration and ensure Cromwell achieved the desired outcome.

"A key consideration with this project was to ensure we provided 'business as usual' for our employees, especially those in Europe who had just been through a corporate amalgamation," said Daniel.

"We wanted to ensure that our people all had the tools and systems in place to do their jobs effectively and securely, while eradicating inefficiency in terms of how we managed everything from an IT perspective," he added.

An 'almost invisible' transition

For the initial phase, the Insight team worked with Cromwell's internal IT experts, as well as Insight's migration partner, Insentra, to manage the Office 365 amalgamation.

"The best outcome of a project like this is when none of the staff have any idea that it even happened. To Insight's credit, this was largely the case with this project," said Daniel.

"On the whole it was a resounding success."



Reacting to the pandemic

Just as the first phase of this project was complete, Covid-19 hit Australia and virtually all of Cromwell's staff started working from home. Having a robust Office 365 foundation in place already, the business was able to rapidly roll out Microsoft Teams as its primary communication and collaboration platform – with an initial focus on chat, voice and video features, to avoid potential data governance issues.



Insight and Cromwell: a strategic partnership

This initial project was the first time that Insight and Cromwell had worked together – though its success means it won't be the last.

“For us, the decision to choose Insight in the first place was very clear. This project was very much a test of Insight's capabilities and methods of working. The project went very smoothly, and the inevitable issues that tend to arise in these types of projects were handled quickly and effectively. Our teams worked very well together, we now have a solid enterprise agreement in place, and we look forward to continuing this partnership on future projects,” said Daniel.

“This was a fantastic project to work on,” said Paul Hennessy, Insight's Commercial Account Manager. “Cromwell are very progressive in terms of their use of cloud-based technologies and are certainly leading the way as a cloud-first business in the property sector. Helping them achieve their goals via this initial licensing project was a great start to our relationship,” he added.

Just a few months after the migration, the benefits are clear:

- Licensing is now clear, consolidated and more cost-effective.
- Users are all on the latest technology and able to communicate, collaborate and work effectively regardless of when and where they are working.
- Utilisation of Microsoft Teams is increasing.
- Data is located on-shore, in both Australian and European data centres respectively, as per compliance requirements.
- Extension of the centralised, cloud-based IT infrastructure, which offers an ideal foundation for agility and innovation.

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