

Whakatāne District Council: Moving to Microsoft 365 the fast, easy way



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Like many local government entities across New Zealand, Whakatāne District Council is steadily moving components of its enabling technology services into the cloud. Accelerating and assuring its journey, the Council looked to Microsoft Gold partner Insight and its Microsoft 365 Foundations service, providing assurance and proven strategies for a problem-free rollout of enabling technologies.

Located in the Bay of Plenty and renowned as the sunniest place in New Zealand, Whakatāne District Council's (WDC) vision is to be known as the place of choice for people to live, work and play. WDC serves Whakatāne, Ōhope, Tāneatua, Edgecumbe, Matatā, Murupara and other communities throughout the Whakatāne District, which has a population of some 38,000 people.

Situation

Grant Probert, ICT Project Lead for WDC, says that while conceptually the knowledge of what can be done with Microsoft 365 is easily grasped, the devil is in the detail.

"Probably the biggest thing is knowing where to start. After all, we have a living, breathing organisation with people working all the time with their Microsoft applications. Moving into Microsoft 365 makes perfect sense, but it isn't a matter of simply diving in and forcing change. After all, we want improvements in productivity and convenience, and not a situation where people are frustrated or hampered in their daily work."

Grant Probert
ICT Project Lead, WDC



Under his guidance, a plan was formulated with a phased project moving into Azure Active Directory, then Exchange, and on to Office applications. At this point, Probert relates, WDC recognised an opportunity for external assistance which would provide guidance and assurance. "It isn't so much a case of 'can we do it ourselves' because we can. The bigger issue was 'can we do it rapidly and with a minimum of missteps'. And that's where external assistance clearly could add value."

Solution

Insight enjoys a lengthy track record as a provider of technology consulting and services to local government across New Zealand, and specifically with WDC where it has delivered various services for more than 15 years. "In talking with them about the direction we're taking, it emerged that they have the Microsoft 365 Foundations solution. It was obvious that this was ideal; **it would effectively de-risk our project by bringing along the expertise of a group of people who do this all the time, and therefore know exactly what to look out for,**" notes Probert.

Microsoft 365 Foundations delivers accelerated configuration of the base Microsoft 365 platform with a focus on productivity, security and governance, offering a proven strategy and approach to mitigate identified risks. The service can be used as a blueprint for provisioning services into Microsoft 365 to ensure security and increased productivity.

Delivery of the service, says Probert, took place over several days spread out over six weeks, with planning, workshopping, and configuration exercises accelerating the WDC journey to the cloud.

Results

When Insight's team initially reviewed the work done by Probert's team in their preparation for a Microsoft 365 migration, it confirmed that correct practice was being followed. "We thought it quite good that what we had planned aligned with what they proposed, so that was a good level of assurance," Probert confirms.

He says value is apparent in the depth of knowledge on offer from Insight's seasoned consultants. "The advice and guidance we received meant nothing is left to chance. And we could ask questions at any time, including around which assets to retain on-premises, and which were suitable for a migration to

Azure, which would work with a VPN, and which wouldn't."

Configuration issues can make or break migrations, he adds, and sure enough, with some people already using Teams and Yammer, the 'formal' migration meant their logins were compromised. "But with Insight's expertise on hand, what could have been a 'user uprising' was quickly resolved. This is one of those areas where, even if you know what the issue is, it can take days to find a solution on your own. With people on hand who work with Microsoft 365 all day every day, it's solved in a matter of hours instead."

Simply put, Probert says

without Insight's support, migration to Microsoft 365 would take longer, result in user frustrations, and potentially cause employee discontent, rather than the desired outcome of better software for better productivity. "Expert knowledge is invaluable. It means getting it right the first time, fast."

Grant Probert

ICT Project Lead, WDC

Microsoft All of Government licensing renewal is coming up in October. Be prepared with Insight – contact us now.

