

Adapting To Change

When it came to migrating the whole of its workforce to Microsoft Office 365, Cosurica's consultancy service proved invaluable to Manchester-based loans company Evolution Money.

At Evolution Money, the future has never been brighter. Founded only five years ago, the success of the business has led to its continued expansion and the company now employs over 160 people at its offices in the lively Piccadilly Gardens area of central Manchester.

In any rapidly growing business, managing the increasing demand for IT can be tough, but throw in the complexities of operating in a highly regulated industry and there's much more to consider, particularly when it comes to data security and compliance. For Evolution Money's IT Manager, Matt Rowe the last 3 years have been both exciting and extremely challenging.



"When I was brought in as the company's first in-house IT Manager 3 years ago there were just 50 of us," says Matt. "Like most businesses, we relied on Microsoft Office software in our day-to-day work. Microsoft licences were being acquired fairly reactively through the purchase of off-the-shelf boxed products, but over time this had started to cause problems. Keeping a track of licences was complicated and we started to experience compatibility issues when staff were using different versions. It quickly became clear this was never going to be a solution that could continue to work in the long term."

With an office move underway and the IT department having grown to 4, Matt knew it was time to bring everyone's system in line to achieve the consistency and continuity needed to facilitate the company's growth. However, migrating everyone to Microsoft Office 365 was not a straightforward solution.

"For many sectors, giving staff access to their mailboxes from any location is viewed as a real benefit to flexible working and productivity," says Matt. "But in our industry it's a whole different ball game. Allowing staff to access our systems from any device or any location could cause a serious data breach. We wanted to keep remote access to email strictly limited to our directors. That meant we'd need to bring the right expertise on board to manage the Office 365 migration so that it could be adapted to meet all of our compliance obligations."

Matt contacted a number of migration specialists, but chose Cosurica after receiving a recommendation from a colleague in a partnering business who had already used the company to co-ordinate a number of successful IT projects.

"From the start, I found Gareth really easy to work with," says Matt. "I'd got the feeling from some of the other providers that they were really just sales people for mass licencing, but Gareth was able to clearly demonstrate his technical knowledge. He came to see us 3 times, at no obligation to us, just to explore our options and review which licensing model would be best. From there he went away and designed the migration process with a detailed plan for its implementation."



Prior to going ahead with the migration, Cosurica worked with the company to test out the process to ensure that everything ran smoothly on the day, causing minimal downtime and disruption to the business.

"We planned the project carefully over a 3 month period from April to June," says Matt. "On the day of the migration, Gareth and Sam from Cosurica arrived at our offices at 7am. This meant they were already on site before the start of the working day to handle anything that might come up. For me that was very reassuring and any little problems we had were resolved really quickly."

As part of the project, Cosurica built an authentication system that prevents unauthorised users from accessing email from outside the corporate network. Built upon Microsoft Active Directory Federation Services, it allows senior staff to sign in from anywhere in the world, but limits front line staff to only signing in from inside the office. This also serves to limit the 'attack surface' available for hackers, as even guessing a password accurately from the outside will not permit access to an account that is only allowed to be used on site at Evolution Money.

In June 2017, Cosurica were engaged again by Evolution Money as part of their business continuity planning for IT. This involved increasing the resilience of its ADFS authentication method and installing ADFS servers across multiple sites including some in Microsoft Azure so that, should Evolution Money's main office be unavailable for any reason, authorised staff can still access their email with no manual tasks having to be performed by an administrator.



"It's with confidence that I can say that Cosurica did an excellent job. It genuinely felt as if Cosurica were working with us to achieve a positive outcome, which is not something I've felt before when using other consultants. Normally, it's been a case of 'No, that's out of project scope' when we've had to make adaptations, but Cosurica were happy to go and above and beyond for us, delivering a result that the whole company were really happy with, on time and within budget."

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