

BUSINESS CASE 1

Case study: How Alif used O365 to solve a business problem

Industry: Education

Size: Campus of 5,000

IT employees: About 20

The approach

This organization made the move to cloud with Office 365 to improve communications and collaboration in the higher education environment.

The lessons that the team learned point the way to a couple best practices:

- 🚩 Don't tackle SharePoint Online first – better to deploy Exchange Online early in the implementation cycle because the capabilities that come in Exchange have cross-team dependencies with impacts on SharePoint, OneNote. After Exchange Online, move to deploying Skype and OneDrive before SPO.
- 🚩 IT-business alignment is important – a business relationship manager (BRM) plays a crucial business engagement role to deliver consistent communications and monitor customer satisfaction. BRMs also bring new skills in a cloud world, including roadmap analysis, functionality evaluation (vs. custom dev work), change management and vendor management. These individuals also ensure effective cross-teaming across IT and LOBs.

The takeaway

This Office 365 implementation lit up various capabilities in waves, leading to better collaboration across three groups: the public, campus users and the IT team, which in the private sector could equate to customers, employees and the IT team. Essentially, mobile access to data, people and processes improved experiences and interactions across these groups. And with the new efficiencies and reliability of the cloud investments, this IT organization could increase its focus on strategy, cross training and team growth.

The outcomes

Certainly, cost savings was a primary driver of the O365 implementation. Outsourcing about 85% of core services and critical systems in two years alleviated the outlay for servers and resources to build out data centres and deploy in-house Exchange servers, particularly when people's skillsets were lacking and specialized vendors could "provide tremendous service ... at a very good cost." Plans for this outsourcing strategy are to get to about 95% managed services in another two years, with some things like security staying on premises but being managed by vendors as well.

The shift to cloud collaboration also increased this organization's focus on core IT strategy:

- 🚩 Driving adoption – training people to use the new O365 tools to get measurable return on investment (ROI)
- 🚩 Ongoing education – mentoring and investing in the IT team for growth through cross training to enhance performance
- 🚩 Reliability and security – addressing unfunded mandates by legislators and university boards to ensure cybersecurity and compliance
- 🚩 Thinking ahead – using analytics to make informed decisions about how the organization uses its cloud services and identifies opportunities for future tech innovation

How is Office 365 helping you solve a business problem? Are you taking a different approach than the path noted above, based on your industry needs?