



Healthcare non-profit leverages Zones cloud migration services

After company mergers, aligning communication systems can be complicated. This was the case for Seneca, a non-profit that needed to unify three independently managed and operated communication systems. Unreliable services, disparate software, high support costs, and HIPAA compliance were drivers to Seneca's decision to adopt a Microsoft cloud-based solution. Zones engineers and our Microsoft licensing team provided the expertise and services to successfully complete the migration project, which solved Seneca's immediate challenges and is bringing new opportunities for the organization.



CHALLENGE

- Unify communications of three offices
- Downtime of current on-premises systems
- Non-disruptive migration to cloud-based environment
- High cost of maintaining communications environment



SOLUTION

- Microsoft Office 365 and Exchange Online
- Microsoft remote support
- Zones cloud migration services
- Zones engineering, onsite support, and training services
- Zones Microsoft licensing services



RESULTS

- Reliable cloud-based services, enhanced communications tools
- Streamlined IT management and lower costs
- Higher level of support services
- Flexible software licensing plans
- HIPAA compliant Agreement

THE CHALLENGE

When Seneca experienced growth from a series of mergers, they needed to unify messaging systems. Seneca's IT manager shared that their "on-premises Exchange environment had been proving unreliable based on the agency's sustained growth and the configuration of the Exchange server as laid out by local consultants who assisted with its original installation/configuration." In addition to email downtime being a major hindrance to everyone in the agency, the IT manager was concerned about the "inordinate amount of time" spent to keep their Exchange server running, "with no real hope to implement a more robust platform in our existing on-premises server structure as a replacement or supplement."

THE SOLUTION

Seneca decided to move their on-premises systems to a unified Microsoft Office 365 and Exchange Online environment. The IT manager engaged the Zones Advanced Solutions Group to do the migration planning and implementation for offices in northern and southern California.

The existing messaging infrastructure was comprised of approximately 1,400 mailboxes totaling more than one terabyte of messaging data across three sites using on-premises versions of Exchange Server 2003 and 2010. The respective Exchange versions hosted in separate Active Directory forests, each with unique SMTP domain names. And there was no unified global address list (GAL) and no resource sharing capabilities between the three sites.

Pre-migration steps

Zones engineers conducted a careful analysis of the Exchange environments and existing network to validate the technology could support Office 365 and Exchange Online. The team resolved technical issues and took added steps to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the migration including:

- > Exchange Server updates
- > Active Directory troubleshooting and updates
- > Domain Name System (DNS) conflict resolution
- > Increase in network bandwidth to support migration

While making preparations for the Exchange migration, Zones engineers also:

- > Validated DNS environment and made changes where necessary
- > Cleaned up existing Active Directory objects that were identified as not meeting the requirements for object synchronization
- > Configured existing Exchange environment to allow for a hybrid connection to Office 365
- > Installed and configured DirSync to synchronize Active Directory objects to Office 365

Migration steps

For Seneca, it was critical that the migration not disrupt communications. Zones engineers created mailbox batches so that like-resources were migrated together. This led to a more efficient and effective transition, while keeping end-users productive.

Engineers completed a final synchronization prior to the Exchange cut over and mail was checked and validated for accuracy. After successfully completing the migration, Zones engineers were onsite leading technical training for Seneca's network administrators and supporting end-users using the new applications. They also stayed available for 60 days after the migration to assist in resolving any issues.

THE RESULTS

Seneca's IT manager: "By working with Zones, we were able to integrate all agency staff (who previously had emails hosted across three separate on-premises Exchange servers) onto one unified system which allows for continued ease of maintenance by a centralized IT department, as well as features like shared calendars and contacts between staff who were originally unable to share email content across different Exchange platforms."

Reliable, enhanced communications and collaboration

Dependable performance was a key factor in Seneca's decision to migrate to a cloud-based solution. The IT manager points out that it "means that we no longer have a single point of failure for connectivity to email (previously our main administrative location hosted our on-premises Exchange, meaning that any internet/power outage would effectively disable email access for the entire agency)."

By adopting Office 365 with Exchange Online, employees can quickly and conveniently share best practices and exchange information. The solution is also helping the entire organization strengthen their affiliation and deliver better community services.

Next steps include leveraging the corporate social network capabilities to quickly bring people together so they can collaborate on files and organize projects. Employees can even extend conversations to clients and to colleagues.

Streamlined IT management

With the new environment, the IT organization is seeing a variety of short- and long-term benefits including:

- > Less time and resources spent on hardware maintenance
- > Higher level of support, service, and resources
- > Streamlined management of Office 365 software and licensing
- > Cost savings from the consolidation of resources

The solution eliminated time-consuming management of disparate systems, and ensured uninterrupted services by "working with us to negotiate a fixed monetary rate for providing remote support of our hosted Exchange platform moving forward." "Engineers have been able to assist with the few issues that have popped up over the past year or so within the span of a few hours," added the IT manager.

Flexible software licensing

To implement the cloud solution, Seneca took advantage of Microsoft's licensing flexibility for Office 365. They wanted to move people across platforms or provide them with new technologies without incurring any additional costs. With Office 365, Seneca can get all client access licenses incorporated into one price. Employees can be moved between on-premises and online services, as required.

Zones implemented a solid Microsoft solution to merge the legacy networks into a single modern IT environment – benefiting the business, end-users, and the IT organization.



Reliable
cloud-based
services



Streamlined
IT management,
lower costs



Higher level
of support

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