

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

OFFICE 365

Revamped email system offers a vital Western New York non-profit a fresh Outlook



PeopleInc

THE CHALLENGE

Founded in 1970, Williamsville, N.Y.-based People Inc. works with seniors, families, and people with disabilities—from residential help to employment support to health care—to help folks live more healthy, independent, productive lives. The non-profit agency has grown over the years, and now serves a broad swath of the Western New York region. That growth includes 180 separate sites and a network of 2,000+ computers that their staff depends on to do their jobs. Email is one of the most crucial functions. Email allows the employees to effectively communicate with one another and enable them to provide the best quality services for the people they serve. It needs to be dependable and fully functioning 24/7.

"We provide services to the developmentally disabled, so anytime staff has to deal with technology issues, it takes time away from their ability to serve people," says Dean Gross, People Inc.'s Associate Vice President for Information Technology.

Through 2017, the company had been using an internally hosted Microsoft Exchange environment for email. But the system had become difficult to deal with and unwieldy.

"Our Exchange environment was clustered," Dean explains. "There was two of everything. All the servers. Maintenance was a reoccurring and tedious process."

And then there were storage limitations to deal with.

"We didn't have unlimited storage, so we had employees contacting us because they exceeded their storage quota," Dean says.

Between glitches and storage issues, the email system was straining the company's relatively small IT department. After a conversation with Innovative Solutions, the answer became clear.



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PARTNER SOLUTION

What People Inc. didn't know at the time was that the web-based Microsoft Office 365—including its Outlook email system—is available to non-profit companies at no cost. In speaking with Innovative Solutions, making the switch seemed like a no-brainer. People, Inc. decided to shift their email system away from the Exchange environment to Office 365—a welcome trade for their current system, considering Office 365 includes a substantial 50GB mailbox size per user, features more security certifications and compliance, and comes with the full support of Microsoft Office 365.



Discovery + Analysis

The Innovative Solutions team mapped out the entire project to make the cutover quick and seamless. That included a discovery process in which the team conducted a full audit of all the users on the email system to make sure they were all validated for Office 365 licensing.



Optimization + Cleanup

The team also conducted a cleanup, eliminating mailboxes from the system that were no longer active or needed. Many companies can benefit from the cleanup process because it spares them the cost of paying to license users that are no longer active, such as former employees.



Migration + Cutover

Next the process of copying users' mailbox data began, and ran in the background while employees continued to use the current system. When everything was in place, Innovative worked with People Inc.'s IT team to determine when they wanted to cut over to Office 365. Innovative used special software to direct Outlook to stop pointing to the company's local server and start pointing to the cloud.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

Since implementing Office 365, People Inc. staff have been able to get more done—and focus more on what they do best. Which makes for happier end users, according Dean.

"It's clear that we get fewer calls for support and the system is more stable with less interaction," he says, adding, "The new system is less time-intensive for the staff. Fewer issues of troubleshooting. We don't have clusters going down. Problems of maintenance are greatly reduced." Plus, people aren't calling with storage issues or file size issues. "We have fewer support calls coming than we would have had for Exchange-related items," Dean says. "Each mailbox was originally limited in size, and that limit has been removed for all practical purposes. We don't receive phone calls anymore from people saying, 'I can't send this large file.'"

