Flaherty & Collins Properties Migration to Microsoft Office 365

Cloud Productivity solution creates synergy for dispersed workforce

As one of the Midwest’s largest and most experienced developers of multifamily properties, Flaherty & Collins Properties is a leader in development, construction, and property management.

OVERVIEW

Flaherty & Collins Properties experiences full communication integration after migration to Microsoft Office 365.

Client Challenge

• To provide standardized and consistently available productivity tools to all Flaherty & Collins Properties (F&C) employees.
• To remove the technology separation between remote employees and employees at headquarters.
• To implement a solution that minimizes support requests and costs.

Solution

• Cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 suite including Exchange email, Skype for Business, Microsoft Office suite, Microsoft Office online, email protection, SharePoint, and OneDrive for Business.
• The migration plan included a communication campaign, testing and user pilot, methodical migration, and ongoing user training.

Results

• Successful migration with quick user adoption and no service down time.
• Fully integrated communications for all employees.
• Flexible solution, easy to administer and grow as the organization grows.
THE CHALLENGE

F&C used on-premise servers to house its communications solutions including email, document storage, calendars, and more. This configuration proved to be a challenge for employees, as well as management by the IT team.

The solution created a consistent experience for the 30% of the employees who worked in the main office; however, for those working remotely, the experience was less than desirable. For remote workers, simply accessing corporate email and sharing documents was a slow, multi-step process without complete functionality. Additionally, the IT team experienced significant issues related to ongoing maintenance of the system and volume of related helpdesk requests.

THE SOLUTION

The KSMC business technology team began working with F&C in 2012, undertaking a variety of technology projects and serving as its managed services provider. KSMC established a technology roadmap, including a planned upgrade of the communications solution in late 2014 as the on-premise servers neared their expiration.

Microsoft Office 365 emerged as the leading solution for this upgrade allowing flexibility for growth while addressing immediate communication and productivity needs. Office 365 includes a variety of innovative features that enable the increasingly mobile workforce, improve communications and information sharing, and increase user productivity. In late 2014, F&C migrated to the full Office 365 suite.

The migration plan included:

- Internal Testing
- Communications Campaign
- Pilot with Four User Groups
- Four-Phased Migration Over Two Weeks

The solution was designed by KSMC to drive toward F&C’s business goals by providing the tools needed and the strategic implementation of them. In order to achieve success, KSMC developed a holistic plan for a migration that addressed the technology, as well as the people and processes involved. Before migration, KSMC and F&C worked through key steps to build internal buy-in and drive adoption. A communication campaign informed employees of timelines and built excitement around the launch. A pilot with a small, diverse group of employees was completed. Incorporating learning from the pilot, Office 365 was then fully migrated. Finally, ongoing employee training is used to enhance knowledge of the full functionality of the solution and drive further internal productivity.
“Office 365 allows us to be fully integrated where everything is working seamlessly. It’s real world, modern, fully integrated. That applies to those in the office and those working remotely - everyone can work closely together. This has hugely improved our operations.”

Brian Moore  
Marketing and Communications Director

“...the KSMC staff has been easy to work with and attentive to our needs as a company.”

Jill Meals-Herron  
Senior Vice President, Property & Asset Management

IMPACT

F&C has experienced a number of transformative benefits since migration to Office 365.

• Reduced maintenance and support requests for the IT team
• Solution flexibility for a growing, geographically diverse, and mobile organization
• The value of full integration of organization communications

The efforts of the IT team during an Office 365 migration – or any technology implementation – are significant and certainly don’t conclude with migration. However, the reliability of Office 365 and ease of managing one system in lieu of multiple have drastically reduced the time needed for maintenance and troubleshooting. As one example, because adding and subtracting users is such a simple process within Office 365, it makes business growth and change a seamless process from an IT perspective.

The most noticeable benefit is the full integration of communications across the organization. The consistent and seamless access experience has led to simplicity of communication between headquarters and property offices. Most importantly, the separation between employees at headquarters and remote locations has significantly diminished and better collaboration and client service is emerging.

The successful migration of Office 365 has also opened the door for other technology solutions to improve productivity and overall integration of F&C employees. The partnership continues to grow, with KSMC managing F&C’s full suite of technology applications.

As KSMC’s team becomes more heavily immersed in the day-to-day operations of F&C, opportunities for efficiencies and strategic alignment will continue to be presented and implemented, leading to a more efficient, productive organization.

Office 365, with its robust tool set, has enabled F&C to operate at the highest level of communication, collaboration, and productivity. Without KSMC’s thoughtful implementation accounting for the full spectrum of technology, the people, and the processes, as well the development of a solution that works toward business goals, the full range of benefits wouldn’t be realized. With thoughtful implementation and strong partnership from KSMC, the solution has truly been transformative for Flaherty & Collins Properties.
ABOUT KSM CONSULTING

KSM Consulting, LLC (KSMC) is a technology, data, and management consulting firm founded almost 10 years ago. The firm offers services from nine practice areas, with Business Technology as the core and largest practice. The Business Technology team provides IT assessments, strategic solutions, network services, implementation services, and disaster recovery services to its clients. With every engagement, KSMC works to align the business with technology to help clients further their goals.

PROFILE

Ryan Achterberg specializes in serving clients by helping them align their business goals with technology planning and implementation. Working in technology his entire career, Ryan’s experience spans technology advisory and assessments, network design and implementation, and a focus on cloud solutions such as Office 365 and Microsoft Azure to support business initiatives and solve business challenges.

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