Falmouth University
SharePoint 2013 & Office 365 Consultancy

Introduction

The customer, Falmouth University has over 100 years experience as a leading specialist university with an international reputation for excellence in art, design, media and performance. Through it, Falmouth is redefining creative education and making a vital contribution to the resurgence of the local and global economies.

Falmouth University has recently been awarded the No.1 UK Arts University by the Sunday Times. The University is supporting a forecast growth from 4000 to 8000 students by 2020 and have around 700 staff.

Organisational challenges and impacts

The University uses Microsoft SharePoint for staff documentation and Office 365 (O365) for student email. Their SharePoint 2010 environment is widely used by staff however does not have full user adoption with users storing documents in many different areas and no clear system in place. Holding around 170 team sites, their SharePoint environment has become more of an unstructured document storage area than the collaborative content management system they would like. The SharePoint environment has also been found to be unreliable with a continual occurrence of problems.

The University recognised that they needed to create greater user adoption by upgrading their current existing SharePoint 2010 platform and restructuring their SharePoint system. With this in mind, a SharePoint 2013 farm had been created, however the University wanted to explore other potential routes to ensure that they were choosing a solution that was most suited to their needs.

Falmouth is very aware of the surge and speed of momentum in Microsoft Cloud collaboration technologies for Higher Education Institutions and therefore were keen to look at how O365 could benefit its staff as well as its students.

FALMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

Sector: Higher Education
Student: 4000
Staff: 700

Challenges Summary

- ⚑ Current SharePoint environment mixed and used as unstructured filing system

- ⚑ No clear roadmap for on premise and cloud Microsoft services

- ⚑ Limited internal resource

- ⚑ An awareness of cloud collaboration technologies but constrained on internal resource and knowledge to analyze the possible technical architectures in order to formalize the most suited route for the business.

- ⚑ No enterprise roadmap

As the University had only one technical member of staff focused on SharePoint, it was highlighted that they would need further assistance to aid them in creating an enterprise roadmap as well as helping to plan their architecture design and migration.

With the forecast to grow its community by double within the next five years, the project to restructure SharePoint for immediate and forecast growth to provide a better staff and student experience has become a priority to the business, and to explore what other benefits Office365 can deliver.

The Chosen Solution

Falmouth made the decision to take a consultancy approach to support early feasibility and planning work for its technical projects and aid with their enterprise roadmap, platform architecture design and migration planning for the major products that sit under the MS Collaboration suite.

Fuse (a gold competency partner of Microsoft) were chosen to work with the University to provide strategic consultancy. With over fifteen years' experience in SharePoint and other Microsoft collaboration technologies, we have sound knowledge in business systems ranging from SMEs to global corporations, including a number of academic institutions.

Firstly, Fuse ran a SharePoint health check which produced a comprehensive set of documentation for the University to use as a support document. As part of the health check Fuse also performed a manual inspection of the farm infrastructure environment and interviewed University IT staff to discuss the issues and concerns they have with the existing farms in order to uncover any specific problems they and the business face.

A high level roadmap design for migration was then created by evaluating the University's current SharePoint 2010 environment and using previous experience to highlight any areas that could prove problematic in order to provide accurate timescales and costs.

The project requirements were split into three phases: 1. SharePoint, 2. Office 365 for Staff and 3. BI Reporting. For each phase, Fuse held a number of question and answer sessions along with workshops.

Business aimed presentations were held as well as IT focused presentations. This gave the opportunity to ensure both IT and the business gave feedback on the direction of the project and what they hope to achieve.

Fuse gathered information on the issues noted with the SQL and SharePoint platforms used by the BI environment and provided a summary response to the issues and risks.

Technology

s SharePoint

■ Windows Azure

□ Office 365

Workshops Covering:

- Options for scaling, continuity and disaster recovery for different SharePoint deployments whilst considering the costs, benefits and complexity of each option

- Designing and architecting topology for Office 365

- Finalisation of the overall platform architecture for O365 and its dependencies with any on-premise systems and services

Throughout the phases, workshops and Q & A's were tied up with the provision of documentation to be handed over to the University for evaluation and then to be used as support documents.

Results Achieved

From the resulting information produced in the SharePoint health check, Fuse gave the University a set of recommendations and implementation steps to optimise the SharePoint farm.

As a result of the Q & A's and workshops Fuse worked with Falmouth to create a SharePoint platform design that supports a successful migration and fully meets the requirements of the University for years to come.

A final design for O365 has also been prepared by Fuse and ratified by Microsoft before being presented to Falmouth.

Although Microsoft Azure was not the focus of the Q & A's and workshops, when holding discussions it emerged that Microsoft Azure would be extremely beneficial to the University in areas such as for backups, testing sites, disaster recovery, storage and authentication. Fuse has included this recommendation in their roadmap to aid them towards this move.

Fuse has equipped Falmouth with a solution and roadmap tailored specifically to their business needs. Having discussed all avenues and consulted both key stake holders and IT staff, Falmouth can be confident that the solution they chose is the most suited to their environment.

Benefits Summary

✓ Further knowledge and understanding of different SharePoint deployments

✓ Designing and architecting topology for Office 365

✓ SharePoint platform design that supports a successful migration

✓ Office 365 platform design

✓ Design and architecture topology for Microsoft Azure including its business benefits

✓ Equipped with a solution and roadmap tailored specifically to their business needs

Customer Quote

"Fuse were put into a challenging environment at Falmouth from day one. Andy from Fuse had a professional approach and great soft skills that broke down the barriers and enabled the output to be effective for all the stakeholders involved. Fuse clearly have a high caliber of technical knowledge and experience, and have given us a lot of 'added value' on top of the core consultancy work."

Joe Grant
Business Information Systems Project Manager

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