

A true modern workplace transformation

When the Western Australian Government set about amalgamating four agencies responsible for managing the state's planning, land and heritage assets, it knew it faced a huge digital transformation to bring all staff together.



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

The 2017 merger saw the departments of Planning, Lands, the State Heritage Office and the land and heritage functions of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) merged as a result of public sector reforms.

The goal was to deliver more effective and responsive government services. But to do that, the various agencies' IT systems and digital identities needed to be integrated so that the public and key stakeholders could easily deal with the newly created Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH).

When four became one

As the agencies merged, the impetus to integrate in the digital space became clear. Staff were emailing each other from different email accounts, accessing different systems and simple tasks, such as the sharing of calendars, was proving challenging.

The time was right to embrace the concept of a modern workplace, allowing every staff member to work flexibly, collaboratively and securely from any location and device, using cloud first technologies.

For Ian Millar, Chief Digital Officer, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, a cloud-first approach was the obvious path to take given the strategic move to the cloud underway across all government departments. It started with his vision of providing a modern collaboration experience to all staff, regardless of where they are located or in which part of DPLH they work.

The challenge DPLH faced was to deliver this vision across four different agencies in a short period of time with a limited budget, without disrupting the business.

"Office 365 was the obvious platform choice for our vision. It met all the requirements and would enable us to deliver a modern workplace faster," he says.

Empired was selected as DPLH's preferred Microsoft partner to deliver on the vision to bring together four agencies into a single cloud-first collaboration environment in a secure and seamless manner. Their strong identity management, cybersecurity and

Microsoft 365 capability and experience in complex migrations and environments proved to be deciding factors.

The program was very well balanced in delivering the modern workplace experience and security capability to all the DPLH users, while migrating three of the four the agencies (users, computers, servers, applications) across to a single environment. The project and change management success across all the packages was a result of excellent coordination between Empired and DPLH to ensure smooth migrations and excellent adoption rate of the new technology.

"It was a mammoth task. We needed to take calculated risks along the way to achieve the goals. Communication was the key to the whole project with regular executive updates, news articles on the intranet and team briefings. I sent out monthly Chief Digital Officer technology updates on the progress of the project, providing change management to stakeholders," says Ian.

It started as a simple, yet important symbol of unification across previously separate agencies, to provide a single DPLH identity and email address for each staff member in the newly formed agency. Empired used its expertise to consolidate all the agency users into a single identity harnessing the power of Microsoft Azure AD and Office 365, Microsoft's cloud-based productivity suite.

Part of the vision to provide a single user experience across the department was a new Windows 10 Standard Operating Environment (SOE) to unify the users. To reduce user impact, Empired deployed the new Windows 10 SOE during the Office 365 and domain migrations and minimised the user interactions to a single, but positive interaction per user.

At the same time, Empired identified and migrated workloads in the agencies' legacy environments that were best suited for Azure. This provides the secure platform for future workload transformations and migrations to Azure.

"Ian saw this amalgamation as a pivotal time to make a bold move," says Jaen Snyman, Empired's Practice Manager – Modern Workplace.

"By moving directly to the cloud and fully embracing the modern workplace in one go, DPLH avoided having to do a double migration, therefore reducing cost and most importantly, the time to value."

Security first

From the start DPLH and Empired, paid close attention to the cybersecurity requirements for the new modern workplace in DPLH. In fact, a project to specifically address cybersecurity for the cloud transformation program was initiated at the same time.

Enabling better government

"We were the only new agency of this size to achieve a single identity, implement flexible workplace services as well as single core corporate systems all at the same time, including a single payroll, finance and internet site," says Ian.

DPLH is now well on the way to becoming a true modern workplace as part of a digital transformation that will see paper forms replaced with digital workflows, a Lenovo laptop or Surface Pro issued to every employee to allow for flexible working, cloud-based applications and the use of Infrastructure-as-a-Service, and all staff on a single DPLH network with integrated core business systems.

Two years on from amalgamation, DPLH is delivering services and managing assets for the people of Western Australia, with ICT, secure identity and email the productive enablers they should be.

"Empired understood my vision and goals," says Ian.

"I consistently receive excellent service from Empired and their team culture is great. They are extremely capable and very agile to work with."

For Jaen, the project, one of Empired's largest and most complex modern workplace implementations to date, shows Empired's depth of experience and ability to manage multiple streams of work to deliver the desired outcome.

"We've worked with Ian for a long time, so we understood his vision. All of these transformations were done simultaneously behind the scenes, without impacting his users. Now DPLH has the benefit of an evergreen platform that will serve them well in the long term."

"We were the only new agency of this size to achieve a single identity as well as consolidating onto single, cloud first core corporate system at the same time."

Ian Millar

Chief Digital Officer

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

SNAPSHOT

- Bringing together four government agencies required a secure single identity, email addresses with Office 365 functionality and multifactor authentication for over 900 DPLH staff
- Windows 10 was rolled out to every desktop and Empired advised on modern workplace hardware upgrade requirements
- Full Microsoft 365 and Azure security reference architecture was deployed to protect all users, devices, services, applications and provide proactive and advanced threat protection and insights into security events
- Cloud migration saw many agency workloads moved to the Azure platform, in line with state government policy and giving DPLH the security and flexibility it required to move towards implementing a modern workplace
- Empired was there to support DPLH on every step of the journey as the new agency embarked on what is still one of the largest IT projects involving the merging of government departments

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