

## Australia's leading consumer advocacy group boosts productivity, reduces costs and complexity with Google Apps for Business



The People's Watchdog

### At a Glance

#### What they wanted to do

- Find a user-friendly system for communication and collaboration
- Make it easier for employees to work anytime, anywhere
- Reduce IT complexity
- Cut costs related to communication and collaboration

#### What they did

- Standardised on Google Apps for Business
- Used Google Calendar for scheduling
- Collaborated on projects using Google Docs
- Moved intranet to Google Sites

#### What they accomplished

- Increased productivity through easy-to-use tools
- Provided anywhere, anytime access for staff
- Reduced IT overhead and complexity
- Cut capital expenditures

### Business

Deemed "The Consumer's Champion," CHOICE empowers consumers to get the most out of their purchasing decisions by providing a mix of advocacy and advice. Funded by consumers, for consumers, CHOICE is a trusted and independent voice working for Australians. CHOICE campaigns to protect and assist consumers through changes to laws and industry practices. The company's fair and unbiased reporting and testing on products and services helps consumers find the right products for their particular needs and budgets.

### Challenge

Until recently, CHOICE's staff of 90 people had difficulty collaborating with each other to review products, publish the organisation's comprehensive website and print magazine, and conduct other business activities. The organisation had been using an undisclosed solution, but according to George Perry, Commercial and Finance Director at CHOICE, the software was not user-friendly. "Our staff did not enjoy working with our existing software," he says. "It was extremely difficult to use, and this was compounded by the fact that it would not synchronise mobile and desktop emails and calendars, making it difficult for everyone to stay in sync. Our employees wanted to work productively both at the office and at home – but the solution at the time did not provide the seamless anytime, anywhere access we needed."

From an IT standpoint, there was another layer of unwelcome complexity. "Our systems – CRM, ERP, and so on – were decentralised and not well integrated," he says. "The existing solution was yet another standalone system that we had to manage."

### Solution

As part of a wholesale business transformation initiative, CHOICE began looking at new options for communication, collaboration, and calendaring. Perry and his team reviewed several vendors' products and conducted an employee survey asking what the staff would prefer to use. "We found that almost everyone already had personal Gmail accounts, and they enjoyed using them," says Perry. "We realised that Google Apps would be easy on our staff, our IT team, and our balance sheet. Most of all, Google's tools would give employees the flexibility to work at home or at the office – Google Apps fit our needs perfectly."

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**—George Perry, Commercial and Finance Director, CHOICE**

### Results

According to Perry, Google Apps was easy to deploy and required almost no customisation to fit the organisation's needs. After a short pilot program and working with local partner SMSMT, CHOICE rolled out Google Apps in phases.

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## About Google Apps

Google Apps is an enterprise-ready suite of applications that includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Docs and Spreadsheets (online document hosting and collaboration), Google Sites (team site creation and publishing), and Google Video (easy, secure sharing of video content. Google Video is not available in all countries.).

For more information, visit:

**[www.google.com.au/apps](http://www.google.com.au/apps)**

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*—George Perry, Commercial and Finance Director, CHOICE*

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In retrospect, the IT team would have conducted a "Big Bang" implementation, converting all employees at once. "Overall, we have implemented eight new systems as part of our business transformation, and Google Apps was by far the smoothest," says Perry. "We could have flipped the switch literally overnight with no issues. We had already deployed cloud-based systems. Our employees were heavily involved and wanted Google Apps, and there was no need for training because most staff members already had Gmail."

Today, all CHOICE employees use Google Apps, with a heavy emphasis on Gmail and Google Calendar. Productivity is on the rise because staff can access their emails and calendars from wherever they choose to work – on mobile devices or desktop computers. "With email in the cloud, our employees can work from anywhere and know that their emails and calendars are always synchronised," says Perry. "The reaction to Google Apps among employees has been very positive – there has literally been no debate about our choice."

From an IT standpoint, Google Apps has significantly reduced complexity and costs. "Google Apps is very inexpensive, and the transition was easy and smooth," Perry says. "Google's cloud-based tools have made life easier for our IT staff and eliminated a major source of frustration for our users."

At CHOICE, the use of different aspects of Google Apps continues to expand. Employees are using Google Docs to collaborate on documents online, streamlining project management and eliminating version-tracking issues. The organisation is also moving its intranet onto Google Sites to enable communication across the organisation and support the many varied activities CHOICE conducts – all at no additional cost with Google Apps for Business.

For the most discerning of all organisations in Australia, Google Apps has proven to be the perfect choice. "More than virtually anyone else, we know how to review and select products – that's our forte after all," says Perry. "We investigated several options, and found that Google Apps is the most cost-effective, reliable, and flexible alternative – and all of us here are working more efficiently as a result."

