Smartline reduces reliability on IT support with Google Apps

At a Glance

What they wanted to do:

- Improve stability of IT infrastructure
- Reduce the need for IT maintenance and support
- Enhance the mobility of their employees

What they did:

- Empowered staff to self-troubleshoot with user-friendly Google Apps
- Adopted Gmail, improving mobility and access to emails
- Rolled out Google Drive for file storage
- Used Google Hangouts to communicate with colleagues in other parts of Australia

What they achieved:

- Stable, accessible and secure email system that increased employees' mobility
- Smoother internal and external collaboration as employees are now able to conduct team meetings via Google Hangout
- Better workflow process with Google Docs enabling real-time review and sharing of work documents
- Significant increase in IT team's productivity due to reduced need for IT support and maintenance
- Introduced a secure file storage solution with Google Drive

Organisation

Smartline is an Australian mortgage broking group that was founded in 1999. The firm continued its rapid expansion following a merger with two other leading Australian mortgage broker companies, Mortgage Force and Mortgage Gallery. Today, Smartline has a strong team of 300 mortgage advisors with offices in every major city in Australia. Headquartered in Sydney, Smartline has helped more than 200,000 Australians finance their homes.

Challenge

Prior to their Google Apps implementation, Smartline used Lotus Notes as its main email server. The existing solution proved ineffective in coping with the growth of the company and the increasing need for mobility in the mortgage industry. Outages would have a direct impact to businesses and the IT team had to spend a considerable amount of time on maintenance.

Mr Ganesh Radhakrishnan, Head of IT for Smartline, explained: "It was becoming increasingly difficult, time consuming and expensive for our IT team to sustain future growth with the existing solution. It got to a point where my team was spending a majority of their time keeping the lights on rather than focusing on driving the business forward."

Additionally, the existing solution was unable to provide flexibility to access emails from multiple devices, which was a restriction to the mobility of the firm's mortgage advisors, many of whom work on-the-go.

Beyond looking for a system that would require less IT maintenance and promote mobility, Mr Radhakrishnan shared that Smartline also needed a solution that would work seamlessly for all its offices and meet the high level of security required for organisations in the financial services industry.

"The ease of use was a pleasant surprise for us. Our users were able to carry out minor trouble-shooting on their own without relying on the IT department. Google Apps is a straightforward application with readily available solutions that can be easily sourced. IT was also no longer occupied with heavy maintenance, updates or patching,"
—Mr Ganesh Radhakrishnan, Head of IT for Smartline.

Solution

"When looking for the appropriate solution, we compared a few email platforms and providers. Upon learning Google Apps allowed our employees to access their information from anywhere while being keeping this information completely secured, it quickly became clear that Google Apps is the best fit for our needs," said Mr Radhakrishnan.

With the help of Cloud Sherpas, a Google Apps reseller and cloud service advisor, Smartline made the successful switch to Google Apps. The entire migration process took six months.

About Google Apps

Google Apps is a cloud-based productivity suite that helps you and your team connect and get work done from anywhere on any device. Google Apps includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Drive (online content storage and sharing), and Google Docs, Sheets & Slides (document creation and collaboration).

For more information, visit
www.google.com.au/apps

Result

Productivity has significantly improved for the Smartline IT team. With the new Google Apps solution in play, the IT team is able to confidently focus on business improvement without worrying about server disruptions.

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Other departments in the firm also benefited from the implementation of Google Apps. As Google Apps is a cloud solution, all users – regardless of their location – have the same seamless working experience and reliable access to their emails.

"The increase in mobility is particularly significant given that mortgage brokers don't keep typical 9-5 working hours, and instead work based on their clients' availability. Apart from the 24-7 access to their emails, employees also make use of Google Drive to store and access working files safely from anywhere, with any device. Our employees are able to pull out emails and refer to working documents at the drop of a hat, enabling them to respond effectively to customers even when not at their work desks," shared Mr Radhakrishnan.

Google Hangouts has also been very effective in responding to the mortgage industry's unpredictability, allowing smooth collaboration between employees regardless of location and time. Through Google Hangouts, teams are just clicks away from meeting each other, even if they are halfway across the country. They are also able to review and attend to documents concurrently with Google Docs.

On top of the improved work-flow, Google Apps has enabled Smartline to cut down on costs. Previously, the firm used to have separate servers for file storage, mobile email and spam handling. Now with Google Apps, the firm is able to consolidate these servers and reduce the need to purchase and maintain servers. In addition, as the firm is no longer hosting the email server in-house, they are also able to save on IT infrastructure as well as monitoring and service management cost.