



Fast-Growing City Moves to Online Services to Reduce Costs, Boost Productivity

Customer: City of Plano, Texas
Website: www.plano.gov
Customer Size: 2,500 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Government—Municipal government

Customer Profile

The fast-growing City of Plano, Texas, has a population of 265,000. The 51-person IT team for the city supports 2,500 city employees across 26 different departments.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Online Services
 - Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite
 - Microsoft Exchange Online
 - Microsoft Office Communications Online
 - Microsoft Office Live Meeting
 - Microsoft SharePoint Online
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2003
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Technologies
 - Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access

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Chester Helt, Infrastructure Manager, City of Plano, Texas

The City of Plano, Texas, wanted to enhance its technology service delivery while reducing its total cost of ownership. The IT team migrated to the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite to provide employees with simplified online access to email messages, calendar and task items, and shared documents. As a result, the city has reduced its IT costs, improved data security, and increased employee productivity.

Business Needs

Home to a number of Fortune 100 technology companies, the City of Plano, Texas, prides itself on its forward-looking approach to city planning and governance. In 2008, civic leaders began looking at ways to increase the flexibility of the city's technology infrastructure and to lower its total cost of ownership (TCO).

The city's IT organization supports a total of 2,500 employees and 26 departments. For several years, city workers have used applications in the Microsoft Office 2003 System, together with Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 email messaging and collaboration software and Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2003, to manage schedules, connect with colleagues, and

create and share documents. Still, many employees were requesting access to tools for live chat and web conferencing to further ease communication tasks and more easily coordinate meetings. This trend aligns with the shared goal of several department leaders to empower employees to perform essential job duties from remote locations.

“We saw that email and collaboration tools through SharePoint Server were fast becoming the lifeblood of our organization,” says Chester Helt, Infrastructure Manager for the City of Plano. “And we noticed an increase in demand for additional communication tools. So we started to think about how we could maximize the availability of the

services we already support and deliver new functionality—all while meeting our budget priorities.”

Solution

The city decided to adopt the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite, a set of hosted communication and collaboration solutions that includes Microsoft Exchange Online, Microsoft SharePoint Online, Microsoft Office Live Meeting, and Microsoft Office Communications Online. “We chose the Business Productivity Online solution from Microsoft because it offered the most comprehensive package, both in terms of the end-user experience and IT management capabilities,” says Helt.

By using Microsoft Exchange Online and Office Outlook Web Access, employees can send and receive email messages, manage calendars and tasks, and access contacts—all from a web browser on a mobile or desktop computing device. Because Microsoft Exchange Online incorporates powerful spam filtering and virus protection capabilities, it meets the city’s rigorous IT security standards.

The city uses Microsoft SharePoint Online to provide web-based tools for collaboration and content management. Several teams have taken advantage of SharePoint Online to set up intranet sites designed to provide current information on departmental initiatives and priorities. For example, the city’s police officers can check their department’s team site from their vehicles, or from a community substation, to view updates to policies, minutes from recent meetings, and best practices information. Similarly, the library system for the City of Plano uses its intranet site as a hub for communicating information about

upcoming projects, new reading programs, and changes to the community events calendar.

The Police Department plans to use the Office Live Meeting web conferencing solution to conduct briefings and trainings that officers can access from field-based locations. This will enable officers to spend less time commuting to meetings and more time interacting with members of the community. Based on this pilot project, other city departments are evaluating the use of web conferencing.

The IT team uses the Microsoft Online Services Administration Center portal to centrally manage email accounts, set up and authorize distribution lists, and maintain SharePoint site collections. The team also uses this resource to initiate and track service requests submitted to Microsoft Online Services Technical Support.

Benefits

By migrating to the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite, the IT team for the City of Plano calculates that it will lower its cost of service delivery. The team also expects to gain efficiency from consolidated management of administrative tasks.

Lowers Cost of Service

The city compared the total cost of ownership over a three-year period of its on-premises installations of several Microsoft products to hosted solutions through the Business Productivity Online Standard Suite. Executives found that, by migrating to the Business Productivity Online Standard Suite, the organization could significantly shrink its service delivery budget by reducing licensing,

hardware, maintenance, and energy costs over time, helping contribute to more sustainable economic development. “By shifting to Business Productivity Online, we calculated that we can reduce our yearly operating costs by [U.S.]\$300,000 for each of the three years in our TCO analysis,” says Helt. “Plus, moving data off of our servers means we don’t need to heat and cool as many hardware components in our data center, so we can reduce our environmental impact.”

Eases Management and Boosts Security

With the ability to manage IT tasks and connect with Microsoft Online Services Technical Support through a single interface, the IT team will save time. Moreover, by relying on built-in spam filtering and virus protection capabilities in Microsoft Exchange Online, staff will no longer need to spend time manually configuring and updating third-party threat protection software. By eliminating these tasks, staff can focus more attention on such priorities as network monitoring. “Business Productivity Online will give us better control over our inbound and outbound email traffic and our data at rest, so we can tighten security across the board,” says Helt.

Increases Workforce Productivity

Because city employees will gain easier access to email messages and shared documents, and have the ability to participate in interactive meetings—all through a web browser—they can stay productive, even while away from the office. “As our workforce becomes more mobile, Business Productivity Online helps our police officers and other employees stay connected to the information they need, from practically any location,” Helt says.