



At a glance

Customer

Harbour City Ferries

Industry

Public Transport

Country or Region

Australia

Solution

Microsoft Office 365
Microsoft SharePoint Server 2013

Customer Profile

Harbour City Ferries, serving Australia's Sydney Harbour, is the collaboration of Transdev and Transfield Services, proven experts in public transport, committed to providing world class ferry service.

World-Class Ferry Service Puts Information Where It's Most Needed With New Intranet

With hundreds of harbour employees requiring various kinds of information at their fingertips, and a decade-old intranet that nobody used any longer, Harbour City Ferries in Sydney Australia turned to Microsoft Office 365 to instantly put needed information where it was needed most. With about 150 of their 625 employees at desks using computers, the majority of the organization needs access from vessels crossing the harbour or on the docks helping customers.

Business Needs

Harbour City Ferries, a collaboration of Transdev and Transfield Services, has a stated vision of "Putting Customers First, Harbour City Ferries will operate a world class ferry service." To IT Manager Adam O'Halloran, the ability to do that is primarily based on all ferry workers being able to instantly access the information they need to do their jobs. Whether it be details on the many entertaining events held in the harbour and

the impact they would have on daily ferry operations, tidal schedules on the Parramatta River, Air/Sea advisories or safety information, the faster ferry workers on the vessels, on the docks, and in the front office can access information, the more efficiently and safely the operation runs.

Unfortunately, the flow of information was anything but fast or efficient, despite pioneering efforts over time to make it so. Showing great vision a decade prior, Harbour City Ferries built an early intranet to facilitate information access. However, as time passed new technologies made the functionality of the intranet seem dated, to the point where everyone stopped using it. Given that two-thirds of the workforce did not have access to computers during their working day, the intranet wasn't readily available to them. In light of this, people resorted to manual distribution of information. On a daily basis, people would pick up printed advisories and newsletters that they would then have to carry with them through the day.

With a decade of mobile computing and communication advances, O'Halloran saw an opportunity to fulfill the vision of Harbour City Ferries by creating world-class information access.



Solution

O'Halloran and team began to explore the possibility of building a new and improved intranet site that could be accessed not only using a PC, but by a wide variety of mobile devices including smartphones and tablets that employees could carry with them.

While the provider who helped build the original intranet proposed another proprietary platform, Microsoft gold competent partner Professional Advantage suggested leveraging Microsoft Office 365 to deliver the mobile communication services Harbour City Ferries needed.

The majority of the staff, primarily involved in vessel operations and ticket sales, were not highly computer literate, so accessing needed information had to be extremely easy. "The goal," explains O'Halloran, was to "facilitate efficient communication to the various staff members in the organization providing them with a single source of truth that is both accessible, easy to navigate through and easy to consume that information without requiring extensive navigation to that point." Information at their fingertips.

Leveraging SharePoint Online, Professional Advantage helped Harbour City Ferries make it easy for their people to access whatever information they needed. "Previously, communication to them was limited to newsletters in lunchrooms," explains O'Halloran. Now each worker had the optimal device for their particular role and easy access to the information required for them to do their job.

When asked why they chose Office 365 instead of building and maintaining their own servers, O'Halloran chuckles, "Heh, that's an easy one!" Explaining further, that the two primary considerations were the obvious cost implications of building their own infrastructure versus the far lower cost of using Office 365, and the ability to increase mobility in their workforce.

"Office 365 facilitates that by allowing remote access to our network on the telco network, including wireless across the harbour, then go home to your home telco network and be able to access from there. This is a considerable achievement which I have not experienced with other programs. With a variety of devices being obtained for different users, no matter which device you have you'll have a consistent user experience."



Benefits

Armed with their new SharePoint Online-based solution, Harbour City Ferries has created much more than just another intranet. They are now using SharePoint to replace much of the functionality of email. Additionally, staff can view information based on class of vessel, or their specific vessel. Soon, Exchange Online and Lync Online will be deployed as part of their overall Windows 8 migration to create a comprehensive communications ecosystem.

- Thanks to the ability to deliver information immediately, Harbour City Ferries enjoys significantly increased flexibility in deploying resources where and when they are needed which results in a far more efficient operation.
- Using SharePoint Online as the repository for all information also eliminates the need to have a single administrator responsible for adding or updating new information. Many users access the system daily to provide updates, changes, new advisories and more. Information posting is no longer the province of any individual. Everyone shares responsibility for sharing information as needed. The easy-to-use SharePoint interface makes this simple for everyone.
- Customer-facing staff can now provide passengers with comprehensive, up-to-the-minute information about special events, special ferry services and shuttles, weather conditions and much more. This results in a far superior experience for customers.

- All staff enjoy a consistent user experience no matter what device they are accessing from. Being able to stay on top of what's happening in a busy harbour creates an improved working experience for all ferry staff.
- Emergency management is significantly enhanced as bulletins and advisories are instantly distributed to employees across the harbour on vessels, docks, and public passenger stations.
- "The intranet doesn't exist in a vacuum," emphasizes Adam O'Halloran. Their Office 365-based information solution interfaces readily with their various back-office and operating systems.

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Adam O'Halloran, IT Manager,
Harbour City Ferries





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About Professional Advantage

Professional Advantage is one of Australia's most awarded solutions providers, with over 20 years experience in helping organisations improve their business systems through industry leading software solutions. Our 250-strong team in 6 offices across Australia and internationally has successfully worked with over 1000 organisations.

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