

Data#3 Customer Story

Surfers Paradise Surf Life Saving Club

*Surfers Paradise Surf Lifesaving Club Swells Productivity
with Microsoft 365 Efficiencies*



Data#3



Data#3



Objective

The Surfers Paradise Surf Lifesaving Club (SPSLC) sought the replacement of an outdated email system to ease the administrative burden on staff and volunteers, support decision making and improve governance.

Benefits

- Anywhere email access enabled
- Improved collaboration and secure document management between staff and committee members
- Licensing costs reduced
- Decreased administrative burden on volunteers
- Improved auditing and governance processes

Industry Insight

Microsoft 365 users save an average of 4 hours per week from improved collaboration and information sharing*

*Forrester Consulting, (April, 2019). Total Economic Impact of Microsoft Teams. [Online] Available at: <https://www.microsoft.com/microsoft-365/blog/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/04/Total-Economic-Impact-Microsoft-Teams.pdf>

Approach

The SPSLC functions primarily through fundraising and donations. Funds raised are funnelled almost exclusively towards beach safety and education, leaving little for technology investment. When the City of Gold Coast Council announced a COVID-related grant scheme, the SPSLC seized the opportunity to utilise the funds for much-needed IT improvements, and approached Data#3 for help.

Testimonial

“Using Teams as part of our process, we don’t have to wait for the next meeting to decide an issue. We have much stronger governance and accountability.”

**Trevor Hendy AM, Club President,
Surfers Paradise Surf Lifesaving
Club.**

Solutions & Services

- ✓ Microsoft 365 Migration
- ✓ Microsoft Teams Deployment
- ✓ Data#3 Licensing & Deployment

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The Background

The SPSLC, situated on one of the world's most famous beaches, is a Queensland icon. Founded in the 1920s, the club has saved countless lives as well as trained generations of surf lifesavers. For locals and visitors alike, the SPSLC makes beach days special.

Managed by a volunteer committee and supported by a small staff, the SPSLC is a non-profit that relies on fundraising to continue its vital work. Technology investment had taken a back seat, resulting in users often resorting to using their personal email accounts to act on behalf of the club, with minimal governance.

The Challenge

The SPSLC is at the heart of the Gold Coast community. However, like surf lifesaving organisations around the country, it depends primarily on fundraising efforts. This means that every dollar possible is put towards saving lives. Club President Trevor Hendy AM, six-time Australian Ironman champion, said there is seldom anything spare for technology upgrades.

“Surf Life Saving clubs, like many volunteer organisations, survive on the donations and grants of government and corporate benefactors and individual donations. Unfortunately, technology has not been given a high priority. We are one of the busiest beaches in Queensland, and funds go towards lifesaving equipment instead of technology upgrades,” said Hendy.

“Little of our technology had changed in a decade. It was time to move out of the dark ages.”

Emails were especially problematic. The club's committee and small staff were dependent on an old legacy system that could only be maintained by a single user. Users lacked confidence in the security of the club email system, and found it inconvenient to use.

“Increasingly, committee members were using their personal email, or even accounts related to their ‘day jobs’, rather than the official club accounts,” Hendy said.

Compounding the challenge, committee members are voted into their positions annually, and when members departed, there was little continuity. Those appointed could not see information created by their predecessors and would spend a lot of time trying to get up to speed.

“We had no historic email content about what was sent or received by the committee's predecessors because the email systems were archaic. It was a fundamental thing that I wanted to change, so that an incoming committee member can see what was sent and find important club information without a wild goose chase,” explained Hendy.

The existing fragmented approach meant that information sharing was minimal, which created a governance headache. When a committee member needed to find documents, it was not an easy prospect.

“We were using some aspects of Google Drive for club information, but I could never get access or get it to work for me. Most of our data was stored on a computer in the surf club office, and only admin had access, so I would have to either ask them or go in on the weekend if I wanted to find a file,” said Hendy.

“At one point, the club treasurer even had to resort to asking an external auditor for past financial information.”

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IT Outcome

The club determined that Microsoft 365 would solve its email and file sharing challenges. The product could easily handle the club’s information storage and email needs and support a far greater level of security and collaboration. However, with little available financial resources, there was still the matter of securing funding.

“We started the process about 12 months ago and reached out to Data#3’s licensing business, as we had heard that Microsoft offers special pricing for non-profits. They talked us through the license options, but the committee members lacked the focus and funding to progress the conversation further. Then we learned of technology grants that the City of Gold Coast was offering, and successfully applied for a \$5,000 grant,” recounted Hendy.

Given that the club also needed new laptops in order to capitalise on Microsoft 365, as well as expertise to make the transition, the grant alone would not be enough. The SPSLC went back to Data#3 for further advice.

“Data#3 connected us with one of their solutions architects and offered to help us as part of their social responsibility program. Finally, we were able to progress!” said Hendy.

Heidi Mangan, Organisational Development Specialist for Data#3 commented *“Data#3 is committed to supporting the communities in which we operate. Our corporate social responsibility program provides an avenue where our people have an opportunity to give back and assist those in need through contributing their time, skills and technical expertise.*

SPSLC is an incredible foundation who literally provide lifesaving support! Data#3 takes great pleasure in supporting them so they can continue to deliver their vital services to the community.”

Data#3’s solutions architect provided the SPSLC treasurer with a demo Microsoft 365 tenancy to provide hands-on experience, to manage daily club needs following the transition. Data#3 then worked closely with the club to determine the most suitable configuration options, and provided a final design. All email and domain services were migrated to Microsoft 365.

“The Data#3 solutions architect is a great bloke, always available and approachable, and he had the expertise we needed to move forward. He was happy to answer all our questions to get us to where we wanted to be. Overall, Data#3 was supportive, and we are deeply grateful for their services throughout this project,” commented Hendy.

As part of the design, Microsoft Teams was deployed to provide a more secure document management and collaboration platform. Hendy said this enables the committee to work together far more effectively.

“Now, we have a setup that uses Teams to support real-time decision making. We don’t have to wait for the next meeting to decide an issue. We have much stronger governance and accountability.”

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“The Data#3 team was very human, very easy to deal with, and provided plenty of information.”

**Trevor Hendy AM, Club President,
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Business Outcome

The biggest beneficiary of the technology update is the club's volunteer committee, who are now able to access information without the challenges experienced in the past.

“Previously, it could be hard to retain volunteers, as many ended up spending two or three hours daily on administration. This technology change makes things significantly easier because of the central storage of information. We all have access to what has happened in the past, without guessing or asking multiple people for help,” explained Hendy.

Although largely run by volunteers, the SPSLC is now able to present a more professional image. The staff and committee members can send emails using their official SPSLC accounts, and if one person leaves, their information does not leave with them. As a non-profit the club is regularly audited, and the vastly improved access to information removes a significant amount of stress from the auditing process.

“Microsoft 365 will make it significantly easier for us to find information and confidently manage audits. Previously we have lost crucial audit information when we realised it was only available on a volunteers' personal laptop who had sadly passed away. On another occasion, we were unable to find details of a leasing agreement, which wasn't a good look in an audit. Now that we are using Teams and OneDrive to structure where information is kept, we are much better prepared,” said Hendy.

Familiarity with the new tools varied among the SPSLC team, and Data#3 provided support to key users when the system went live. This additional support enabled the more technically proficient committee members and staff to coach others as they made the transition.

“We went live in November 2020, and the committee has been learning the ropes of the new system. The initial feedback has been hugely positive, even as we are still learning. We focused on emails and common file storage at first, and then we intend to access a greater number of the Microsoft 365 benefits,” described Hendy.

Conclusion

With a reduction in time spent on cumbersome administration, the SPSLC committee is better positioned to focus on its fundraising efforts and service delivery. As club President, Hendy has overall responsibility, strong governance is an especially important requirement.

“Before, the club didn't have strong IT policies, so people could act on our behalf as they chose. Now, we have an audit trail of everything that happens in the club, and there is a greater sense of accountability. The hard work of our committee members won't be lost when they move on, and we will be prepared for audits when they occur,” outlined Hendy.

“The Data#3 team was very human, very easy to deal with, and provided plenty of information. The support of the City of Gold Coast Council and Data#3 will help us to give our best to our Gold Coast community and get on with the business of saving lives.”