

Data#3 Customer Story

Department of Communities

*Department of Communities WA uses Data#3's
Lifecycle 360 for post-merger success*



Data#3



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

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Project Highlight

“Before, we were using spreadsheets, and we would spend weeks at a time just to find specific information about our licenses. Now everything is in one portal.”

Rabin Bhusal, Network Administrator
for the Department of Communities.

Objective

The department wanted to get a clear view of all Cisco devices in use across their environment from a single point, and log support requests efficiently.

Approach

Merging multiple IT environments into a single department was a lengthy and complex process. Some of the team members responsible for the transition had encountered Data#3's Lifecycle 360 platform before, and knew that this would make it easier to manage both their Cisco and other device licensing and maintenance needs.

Outcome

- A single pane of glass to view all Cisco devices
- Ease of logging and tracking support needs
- Able to predict licensing costs accurately
- Simpler planning for equipment end of life

Testimonial

“Data#3 is always very competitive, and in government we must always demonstrate good value. They are also extremely quick to respond, our account manager is very helpful, and the support is exceptional; when we need anything they get back to us quickly.”

Rabin Bhusal, Network Administrator
for the Department of Communities.

Solutions & Services

- Data#3's Lifecycle 360
- Cisco Maintenance

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“Now that everything is in one portal, we can immediately find out what licenses need renewing and what needs support.”

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The Background

In 2017, it was announced that the Disability Services Commission, Department of Child Protection and Family Support, and the Department Housing (including Housing Authority) and Department of Local Government and Communities would merge to become the Department of Communities Western Australia. The newly created state government organisation took on responsibility for providing essential support services for many of Western Australia's most vulnerable citizens.

Bringing together multiple organisations is not a simple process, and detailed plans were prepared. Staff, systems, and processes were brought together in a new head office located in Fremantle.

The Challenge

Given the overlap between the services of the merged government departments, an opportunity was identified to provide a better aligned service to the community. For individuals and families needing to access services, the benefits of dealing with a single agency instead of multiple contacts were clear. Still, bringing together the separate organisations was by no means simple, said Network Administrator, Rabin Bhusal.

“Four or five services merged in 2017 to become the Department of Communities, including areas like social housing and child protection. We had three distinct Cisco device deployments, so we were managing different hardware licenses and maintenance contracts with a number of different partners. Each department also had its own processes to manage the hardware.”

Due to strict government record-keeping requirements, prior to the merger, Bhusal's department had been spending a large amount of time tracking and managing their hardware, licensing and maintenance via spreadsheets.

“We have to ensure everything we have is asset managed, and we must keep records for seven years after we dispose of it, so we need to be accurate,” explained Bhusal.

This was time-consuming, and gave a limited understanding of the Cisco environment, lifecycle, and end of support dates. Multiplying that effort by a number of departments would have stretched resources already busy working to bring together these diverse environments.

Fortunately, Bhusal was introduced to Data#3's Lifecycle 360 platform just at the right time as keeping track of assets and their required licenses and maintenance was just one aspect of a very busy period for the newly formed Department of Communities. Preventing it from becoming unwieldy, while ensuring all responsibilities were met, would give staff more time to focus on other tasks.

“It was a long process that progressed over a couple of years. We had to bring all our tasks together, and it was like we were creating a brand-new domain. We were deploying new laptops, migrating servers to a single community, even our finance teams had to become one. Every change could have a wider impact, so we had to always plan and consider the effect on cyber security, for example,” outlined Bhusal.

“We knew transitioning to a new solution was a big task. Our teams perform very important work, and it's our top priority to make sure they were supported fully.”

Tracking support requests was another “very challenging” area; with separate processes for each of the original departments, tracking issues through to their resolution was far from simple. If an issue was logged by one person, the rest of the team had no way of tracking progress.

“If someone was away, that could slow down our progress, and we wanted to ensure we could improve our efficiency,” said Bhusal.

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The Outcome

The Department of Communities leveraged Data#3's Lifecycle 360, a platform designed to help organisations simplify infrastructure maintenance and contract management across multiple vendors. The platform enables real time visibility and rich insights, so that users can get a clear picture of their situation in moments. It helps to avoid over or under licensing, and plan infrastructure requirements throughout the lifecycle of each device.

“We always had Data#3 as our partner for Cisco device maintenance in my original department, and the discussion started there. We had already started using Lifecycle 360 when our merge happened, and luckily as we made the transition, I had the task of looking after our main contracts and knew how the Data#3 portal could make it easier. I recommended we add the hardware from each of the agencies, so we would have a single source of truth about everything we manage,” explained Bhusal.

“If all our devices from the merged agencies were not visible in a single portal, it would have been very hard for one person to manage.”

While the Department of Communities uses Lifecycle 360 to stay up-to-date about devices from multiple vendors, including its firewalls, the additional functionality for Cisco devices is especially valuable. The platform links directly into Cisco's own support system, so cases can be logged directly from Lifecycle 360, saving time typically spent on initial triaging processes and getting the case directly to the right Cisco experts. The logged case can then be tracked by anyone in Bhusal's team with assigned permissions to access the portal. He can view the overall situation, or drill down into individual device status, at any time.

“When logging support requests, for example if a power supply failed, we can log a case from the portal. Everything is logged in a single place; we can see the full history of the device and the ticket. Before, we would have to spend time checking which partner was supporting the product, and then check case updates from email, which means we may not always have the full record in one place. The whole team has access and can see the progress of each ticket, and if the person who logged the issue is on leave, we can still see what is happening, so someone doesn't have to take time out to follow up,” outlined Bhusal.

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Conclusion

In an incredibly busy time for the IT team, efficiency gains helped to keep on track with the complex merger process. Lifecycle 360 has, said Bhusal, saved considerable skilled time.

“Before, when we were doing spreadsheets, we would spend weeks of time just to look for information about licensing. If our renewal period was in February, we would spend much of January working out which devices needed maintenance, and which didn’t. Now that everything is in one portal, we can immediately find out what licenses need renewing and what needs support.”

The advantage of Lifecycle 360 made it easy to choose Data#3 as our Cisco maintenance partner, but Bhusal said that was not the only factor.

“When we get three quotes for orders above a certain value, Data#3 is always very competitive, and in government we must always demonstrate good value. They are also extremely quick to respond, our account manager is very helpful, and the support is exceptional; when we need anything they get back to us quickly.”

For any organisation embarking on a merger, whether government or corporate, Bhusal emphasised that it is essential to go in prepared for a lengthy process.

“Every agency has different requirements, understands a different system, and has different challenges. It is important to plan from the ground. In our case, we started with moving laptops across, because only then could we move the core systems, for example – there must be a logical, planned process. Starting from the wrong point could cause big problems,” said Bhusal.

“Ultimately, each of the departments coming together performs very important work, and we had to make sure that they could support the community throughout.”

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Data#3 and Cisco

As a Cisco Gold and Master Specialised Partner, Data#3's relationship with Cisco has grown progressively over more than 20 years. During this time, Data#3 has become one of Cisco's largest partner in Asia Pacific with significant capacity throughout Australia and the capability to deliver business outcomes using Cisco's technology.

Through a committed partnership, our technical team has developed deep expertise across Cisco's portfolio, giving Data#3 an edge when it comes to navigating the complexity of the digital era and solving your business challenges with the best technology solutions.

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