

Data#3 Customer Story

Shine Lawyers

*Shine Lawyers Scores a
Collaboration Hit with a
Cloud-hosted Microsoft
Teams Solution*

Data#3



SHINE LAWYERS

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Objective

Shine Lawyers wanted to introduce a modern voice and collaboration solution that would eliminate concerns and improve user experience.

Approach

With the existing Skype for Business solution reaching end of life, the Shine Lawyers team investigated available enterprise-level solutions. When relevant court jurisdictions adopted Microsoft Teams as the platform of choice, the path ahead was clear. Shine Lawyers chose to work with Data#3 as a trusted partner with the right level of Microsoft expertise.

Solutions & Services

- ✓ Microsoft Teams (Software & Hardware)
- ✓ Project Services
- ✓ Consulting

Benefits

- Cloud-hosted voice and collaboration system
- Agile, secure, and modern communication platform
- Centralised management
- Added value with skills shared between the Data#3 and in-house team
- Users enjoy a consistent, reliable online meeting experience
- Reduced burden on IT support
- Customers and staff can connect securely from anywhere
- Modern meeting room experience

Highlight

Online meetings with colleagues, clients, and court officials now progress smoothly in moments, allowing attendees to join from Shine Lawyers' meeting rooms, or any connected device.

Testimonial

“This was probably the least stressful IT project I have been involved with, thanks to the strong support of the Data#3 and Microsoft partnership.”

Geoff Bowman, Cyber Security and IT Operations, Shine Lawyers.

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The Background

Shine Lawyers is a leading Australian law firm specialising in damages-based plaintiff litigation who have been standing up for the rights of everyday Australians for over 40 years. They are focused on helping those that have been wronged and, in many cases, come from diverse backgrounds that restrict them from accessing justice.

Shine Lawyers has more than 750 staff specialising in areas of compensation law including personal injury, class actions, and loss and litigation. As one of Australia's largest litigation law firms, they know the legal system can be confronting - that's why they take all the steps needed to get clients back in control of their lives.

Finding a balance between modern efficiency and traditional service has been a hallmark of Shine Lawyers' success and technology plays an increasingly important role. The firm's Skype for Business Enterprise Edition was approaching end of life, and causing user frustrations, with the global Coronavirus pandemic highlighting the need for a more modern and dependable voice and online meeting option.

The Challenge

For legal professionals, travelling between courthouses, offices, and meetings is all in a day's work. The Shine Lawyers workforce is highly mobile, but no matter where they are working, effective communication is key. Ageing voice and meeting technology was causing considerable challenges, said General Manager – Cyber Security and IT Operations, Geoff Bowman.

“We are in the process of moving to a hybrid cloud strategy, and having a legacy implementation of Skype for Business was holding us back. The infrastructure was not capable of handling meetings with more than 25-30 attendees, and we found we had varying degrees of reliability,” explained Bowman.

Joining meetings was already frustrating, with staff facing frequent delays, and the IT team was kept busy handling support requests. Even those with considerable technology expertise found the process of joining meetings frustrating, with inconsistent layout in meeting rooms adding to the difficulty.

“I was one of the people who might walk into a meeting, and take 10 minutes to get the meeting going. If I was in a leadership meeting, I would be put on the spot to fix the problem,” said Bowman.

“We conducted a high-level cost analysis. With people just trying to join meetings from desks or remotely, for example, coupled with very old physical meeting room equipment, at the start of every meeting there was a five to ten-minute delay while people attempted to join. We have meetings with clients, with external legal parties, and internal groups, so we can have 750-800 people all clamouring to have a reasonable meeting experience. With that five to ten-minute delay, the cost racks up.”



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With the Shine Lawyers team being intensely aware of lengthy technology delays impacting on client experience. Bowman was keen to ensure that technology would ease the process, knowing that seeking legal help can be a daunting prospect.

“For clients, legal situations can be stressful, and we don’t want anything to undermine their confidence in their solicitor or the firm. It should be transparent, there should be no barriers to getting on with our work.”

The sudden changes to the work environment during the pandemic served to amplify the problems faced by users. Where previously, many people attended meetings and court hearings in person, lockdowns and restrictions meant this was no longer possible. The end result was increased pressure on the ageing systems. The in-house IT team, who were already providing support for both Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams to cover collaboration and instant messaging needs, was kept busy. Their focus was on supporting staff and customers through the most challenging of times.

“If you are a lawyer charging in productivity units, waiting one unit for a meeting to start has a knock-on effect from a stress perspective. They call the help desk, and the level of urgency is incredible, they may need to be on a court appearance, or attend a legal meeting. The service desk team was nervous when it came to big Skype for Business meetings, because we couldn’t guarantee it would start on time, or run consistently,” described Bowman.

IT Outcome

Although the move to a modern meeting technology was already planned as part of the law firm’s move to a hybrid cloud environment, shifts in the way courts operated through the pandemic were significant. Bowman said that when it comes to the law courts, even in a pandemic, “the show must go on”, and when relevant jurisdictions adopted Microsoft Teams as the platform of choice, it made the decision easier. Still, other factors also came into play when choosing between some strong contenders.

“Ultimately, there were two reasons for our decision. Cost - the alternative solution was expensive, without more functionality – and also while the solutions were on par, we were already licensed for the Microsoft Teams solution. It really just made sense. Why pay for something we do not fully use, and replace it with something that has a higher learning curve?”

Data#3 specialists provided design, implementation, and services, working closely with Microsoft and the Shine Lawyers IT team, to create a single, secure, unified collaboration and telephony platform underpinned by a comprehensive Switch Connect SIP network. New meeting room equipment from Logitech and Poly was trialled, chosen for its ready compatibility with Microsoft Teams, and its user-friendly design. Bowman credits strong teamwork as a key success factor.

“I have been very happy with Data#3’s expertise in this space. We have a longstanding relationship based on solid experience. In fact, this was probably the least stressful IT project I have been involved with, thanks to the strong support of the Data#3 and Microsoft partnership,” recounted Bowman.

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Users were migrated from the problematic Skype for Business Enterprise Voice to the fully cloud-hosted Microsoft Teams environment. This gave a consistent experience to users, no matter whether they were joining a meeting from one of the newly equipped meeting rooms, or their choice of device as they worked on-the-move. The transition team took a flexible approach, so that each element could be timed to fit around a fast-changing situation where COVID-19 restrictions could change daily.

While the Shine Lawyers IT team already had solid experience in supporting Microsoft Teams, Bowman cited skill sharing and documentation as important components of the project. This helped pave the way for a smooth transition at the conclusion of the project.

“From our perspective, our internal infrastructure team was involved in supporting Data#3 on the project. Data#3 was very accommodating, they recognised that our people want to learn to use and support the environment.”

Business Outcome

For staff at Shine Lawyers, the difference is profound. Gone is the daily frustration of wrangling a tricky and unreliable system, replaced by predictable performance, within a single, familiar app.

“The highlight is that we can walk into any meeting room and get a consistently good experience, it doesn’t matter whether it is a marketing meeting, senior management, solicitors, or IT. It sounds simple, but we can hit the meeting join button and it is suddenly working, that was not the experience we had before,” said Bowman.

“The feedback from across the business has been great.”

The improvement is especially evident in large, company-wide meetings, where staff from branches across Australia and New Zealand can not only participate, but can also take advantage of Microsoft Teams’ integrated features such as messaging and collaborating on documents in real time.

“Now we consistently have 750 people in our town hall meetings using the Microsoft Teams platform, and the feedback is very good. In a 60-day period, we measured 250,000 reactions and messages sent. Engagement is far beyond what we originally anticipated,” commented Bowman.

While Microsoft Teams was already a familiar platform within the business, Shine Lawyers opted to include a training package from Data#3 to help users get the most from the technology. He described a “very strong approach to organisational change management” within the law firm that is designed to help its people to perform at their best.

“We brought in a change management expert to consult with our Learning and Development team. Realistically, though, we have a workforce of very adaptable learners, so it was not a huge leap to get onto Microsoft Teams.”

With staff working more efficiently, costs are minimised and the experience is improved for clients. Moreover, the reduced need to travel to Shine Lawyers’ offices for every meeting saves time, and can make legal proceedings less stressful. Bowman commended the courts in multiple jurisdictions for their reaction to extraordinary circumstances.



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“The legal industry has been very responsive and agile in some ways, like courts accepting digital signatures, which previously would have been unheard of. The industry is changing, and Shine Lawyers will stay at the cutting edge because at the end of the day, that benefits our clients.”

Conclusion

Bowman described a “measure twice, cut once” approach in Shine Lawyers, where effective planning at the start of projects pays off. He recommends working with proven project managers to keep stress to a minimum and get the best result.

“The senior project manager on the job was excellent, really the lynchpin between Shine Lawyers, Data#3, and Data#3’s on-site specialists who were upgrading the meeting rooms. The project management expertise put me at ease, and from a logistics perspective, it was all taken care of,” said Bowman.

“We were in desperate need to get off the legacy application, and at the end of the day it was flawless, there were no issues of great consequence. The technology considerations and failover were well thought out. What impressed me most was that Data#3 treated our environment as if it was their own, they took care to get it done in a quick, efficient fashion.”

While technical skills were critical in the introduction of the new, integrated voice, collaboration and meeting room solution, Bowman advised that it is important to also consider how well the parties involved can work together.

“I have been very happy; we had a good team from all sides. I view Data#3 as a strategic partner, and we enjoy a strong, longstanding relationship with Microsoft. All parties pulled together to get the job done. The outcome is that we have got a good communications and collaboration experience for our end users, and that puts us in a pretty good place long-term,” he explained.

Ultimately, Bowman said that the project equips Shine Lawyers to continue playing a positive role in the industry, where the business can use technology to help make the legal system “more universally accessible” for clients.

“From our perspective, being able to facilitate certain processes electronically is great from an efficiency perspective, whether we are meeting with insurers or consulting with clients, this is ultimately a win-win. The key thing is to keep building on these processes in our industry,” he concluded.

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“It’s wonderful to see organisations like Shine Lawyers benefiting from an investment in Microsoft Technology by adding Microsoft Teams and Teams Calling to their arsenal.”

Christine Ewin, SR Partner Development Manager of Global Partner Solutions, Microsoft.

Data#3 and Microsoft

Since 1994, Data#3 has combined forces with Microsoft to help our customers adapt and grow. Today, we are Microsoft’s largest Australian business partner with the highest level of competency across the Microsoft ecosystem. Our hundreds of accredited consultants are ready to help our customers deliver the digital future; from enhancing productivity and collaboration with Microsoft 365 and the latest Surface devices, to transforming business processes with Dynamics 365, to ensuring our customers get the most value from Azure cloud. Our scale and expertise enable our unparalleled support to customers selecting, deploying, managing and securing Microsoft applications, products and devices.

“The Data#3 and Microsoft partnership leads the way with expert guidance, recommendations and services that truly assist in their business transformation with great collaborative outcomes which is especially vital in the legal space where compliance is key.”

Christine Ewin, SR Partner Development Manager of Global Partner Solutions, Microsoft.

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