Community safety organisation achieves licensing savings with Data#3's Microsoft 365 Optimiser Service

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Objective

An organisation in the rehabilitation industry with a focus on community safety wanted to reduce its overall licensing spend and demonstrate sound cost management. However, to do this would require a greater level of visibility.

Benefits

- **Operational cost savings of $623,000**

- **Continuing cost avoidance from licensing optimisation**

- **Automated workflow to avoid licensing waste**

- **IT staff work more efficiently**

- **Visibility helps with security and risk reduction**

Approach

This organisation needed to demonstrate cost efficiency. As the largest Australian Microsoft licensing provider, it was logical for this organisation to seek Data#3's assistance to ensure licensing was managed efficiently. Data#3 performed a high-level review to demonstrate that the Microsoft 365 Optimiser Service could optimise savings.

Solutions & Services

- ☑ **Microsoft 365 Optimiser**
- ☑ **Microsoft CoreView**

Project Highlight

"It was a very cost-driven exercise. An upcoming Microsoft renewal was the main driver – other aspects, such as security and automation, were side benefits."

Spokesperson for the organisation.

"We have a fixed budget each year, and we must always keep within the boundaries of that."

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The Background

The organisation was committed to allocating Microsoft 365 E5 licences to all active users. However, it lacked the tools needed to closely manage licences without considerable manual effort, something that would be costly in itself.

The Challenge

Microsoft software, in particular Microsoft 365, is an essential business tool for the organisation's staff who work across multiple sites with varying security levels, offices, and reporting locations. The Microsoft licensing is among the most important IT investments each year, so it's imperative that they're managed efficiently. Staff in the busy IT team are conscious of their responsibility to the local community to manage their budget carefully and avoid unnecessary expenses. The spokesperson stated that value for money is prioritised.

"We are audited on cost efficiency and report our measures to a committee annually."

"Every year we can expect a multi-million-dollar renewal of Microsoft licensing. The Microsoft 365 Optimiser Service was presented to us by Data#3, who are our Microsoft licensing partner. They told us about the product and presented the cost savings that could be achieved."

It was important to this organisation to navigate a time of rising prices without compromising high standards to deliver an essential service to the community.

"We have a fixed budget each year, and we must always keep within the boundaries of that," explained the spokesperson.

While maximising the value of their investment in licensing was very much the driver, it could only be achieved with greater visibility of overall usage. The organisation was eager to reduce what the spokesperson described as a "completely manual task" of identifying licensing waste and reallocation. There was no easy way to identify when staff were not using licences for an extended period, or only needed temporary cover. The manual effort of seeking out idle licences also carried a staff time cost, so the potential to automate the process was welcomed.

The Outcome

While the potential of Microsoft CoreView was clear, the organisation wanted evidence that savings would be realised. A proof of concept gave them the answers they needed.

"They showed us as part of the process how much we could save and did a trial to confirm that those were real savings on the table through identification of idle licensing. The tool did the monitoring for us and showed us the extent of savings we could achieve," outlined the spokesperson.

"We had real world examples of what we could save. We constantly are asked to avoid costs and save money, and Data#3 made it real with the proof of concept."

Conducting the Microsoft 365 Optimiser Service was largely a hands-off process for the organisation. Once access was granted to Data#3 into the IT department's Microsoft environment, the tool was installed remotely, and it began to monitor licence usage. Still facing COVID-19 restrictions and operating in a highly secured environment meant that the organisation appreciated this approach, noting that:

Data#3 Customer Story

"We could automatically detect when a licence had been unused for, say, 60 days, and Data#3 was then able to suggest and provide lower cost licences, or a lower quantity of licences, with the benefit of avoiding that cost."

Spokesperson for the organisation.

"We have strict controls over who comes on-site. On-site visits involve working through a full checking process. Over the last year, we have had our regular account manager visits, but the modern workplace team handled everything remotely. We authorised access to our externally hosted Microsoft portal, and they came up with the result. It was a completely hands-off process for us."

Guided by the specialist Data#3 team, Microsoft 365 Optimiser identified idle licences that were invisible by using manual processes, achieving a cost reduction just beyond the predicted numbers.

"We've got several examples. We found staff members on extended leave of six months or longer, such as maternity leave, where it was expensive to assign a licence if the staff member was not working. There are other scenarios where staff members work part-time or are only with us for occasional visits. When state health workers visit, that might only be once every six months, so we don't want a licence sitting idle," continued the spokesperson.

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The organisation opted to leverage Data#3's Microsoft 365 Optimiser service, which is designed to discover, analyse, and produce actionable remediation reports for Microsoft 365 licensing, security, and governance. As well as identifying licence waste, the service makes recommendations on security posture in the Microsoft environment and enables automation of manual Microsoft 365 tasks, such as licence management.

"We have regular meetings where we are presented with a monthly report showing opportunities to reduce our spend and reporting the amount avoided to date."

"We recently underwent our Microsoft 365 renewal for 2023, for example, and saved a cost of $278,986 that we would have paid without the Microsoft 365 Optimiser service."

While the initial automation used by the organisation focused on the identification and management of idle licences, plans are underway to harness further capabilities.

"The service does offer onboarding and offboarding integration into our software management tool, so we are looking to realise that benefit of automated onboarding and offboarding," said the spokesperson.

"I absolutely recommend this product to provide visualisation of cost saving opportunities for Microsoft licensing."

Conclusion

While Data#3's position as the Microsoft licensing provider for this organisation made them a logical choice for this cost avoidance exercise, the team involved in providing the Optimiser service lived up to expectations.

"The highlight was that we got an excellent resource. Those we worked with were available, responsive, had a professional manner, and strong communication – they were excellent to work with. They made it very easy for us," recalled the spokesperson.

Data#3 Customer Story

The greatly improved visibility of the organisation's licensing reduced risk of wasted investment. The resulting tightened management also enhanced security, and automation took away time-consuming manual processes from their busy IT team. Still, their spokesperson concluded, the objective of value for money has been the driving force behind the project and was the most pleasing outcome. While the business case to support implementation of the Microsoft 365 Optimiser service predicted savings of $583,000, as of early 2023, the cost avoidance in the overall organisational Microsoft environment had reached $623,000.

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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.

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