Department for Education South Australia

Department for Education in South Australia improves efficiency with Data#3 Managed Services

Data#3

Government of South Australia
Department for Education

Data#3 | Government of South Australia — Department for Education

Objective

The Department for Education wanted to achieve a smooth transition to a new managed service provider that would offer greater transparency and a true partnership.

Benefits

- Smooth transition from previous MSP
- Transparency of MSP activities
- Streamlined systems increase efficiency
- Allowed IT staff to focus on high value projects
- Extended team with access to a wide range of skills

Testimonial

"I was really impressed by the partnership between the Department and Data#3 to get a positive outcome: we don't see them as simply a managed services provider, but as a strategic partner."

Simon Chapman, Assistant Director, Digital Architecture and Operations, Department for Education South Australia.

Approach

The Department for Education chose Data#3 as their managed service provider (MSP) through a competitive tender program. Established systems and customer references played a key role in the decision.

Project Highlight

"The highlight was the proactiveness of Data#3, the way they went about the engagement was positive and professional, and the process they used was highly effective."

Simon Chapman, Assistant Director, Digital Architecture and Operations, Department for Education South Australia.

Solutions & Services

- ☑ **Managed Services**
- ☑ **Storage and Backup services**

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The Background

The South Australian Department for Education (The Department) provides education, training and child development services to support children, young people and families as they reach their learning goals.

The Department was nearing the end of its contract with an existing Managed Services Provider (MSP) and sought a future partnership that would serve it well through an exciting phase of transformation in education services.

The Challenge

In a state that spans vibrant cities as well as rural and remote communities, striving for excellence in education is both challenging and rewarding. Innovative use of technology is seen as a tremendous opportunity by the Department. The busy in-house team is passionate about raising the bar of technology in the education sector, something Assistant Director, Digital Architecture and Operations, Simon Chapman said he could "talk about all day."

To dedicate efforts into providing the best services within the Department and to schools, the team depended on a managed service provider. When that contract neared its conclusion, it was seen as an opportunity for progress.

"We were looking for someone we could have a long-term strategic relationship with. We were keen to find value-adds that a service provider could bring to education to support modern learning," said Chapman.

"Government is complex, and every agency is different, with unique processes around each area. There is a phase of building up knowledge and understanding the environment of the customer for a managed service provider. We needed those dedicated resources who would understand us and the way we work."

Any change to existing managed service arrangements needed to be handled with care, in order to avoid any disruption to the Department's vital work. With this in mind, Chapman scrutinised the approach to transition in each tender response.

"We were on a previous whole of government arrangement with a different provider and we needed to know that there was a plan in place that could make that happen smoothly," said Chapman.

To verify suitability and experience, the Department for Education team did its homework, diligently following up references to get a sense of how well potential partners would mesh with the in-house team. Chapman was keenly aware that there could be no loss of focus on the important work of supporting South Australia's school communities.

"Our approach was that we needed this to be a partnership to truly achieve a successful transition. We knew we needed dedicated resources and a proven process."

Beyond the immediate challenge of transitioning between providers, the Department saw any managed services agreement as an opportunity to access a broader knowledge base, with an opportunity to free the busy in-house team from day-to-day activities. Overall efficiency gains, increased insight, and improved resolution times were also high on the wish list.

"We identified that there was room to streamline the support process and get a clearer view."

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Business Outcome

After careful consideration against each required criteria, the South Australia Department for Education selected Data#3 as its new managed services partner. This signalled the start of an in-depth planning phase to ensure a smooth transition.

"We had weekly meetings and then, as we got closer, daily stand-up meetings between Education and Data#3's specialised team. Each week we had progress reports from the project manager, so we knew what activities had been completed and what was coming up. This all followed our overarching plan and agreed milestones," described Chapman.

Some aspects of the transition merited a more in-depth look, with the Department for Education team keen to make the most of a wealth of enhanced systems and services available to them. Chapman said that this proactive approach served the Department well as it strove to get maximum return on its managed services investment.

"We conducted workshops focused on discovery and explored various value-added services. One example of added value was the integration of our service desk tool, 'ServiceNow', with the systems of Data#3. Any requests logged in our tool became accessible to the Data#3 team through their own ServiceNow system, which saved our teams a significant amount of time as we were able to manage everything without leaving our own systems."

The integration was about more than saving on administration effort. It also gave the Department real-time visibility of every ticket in progress or completed. Every action and comment from Data#3 engineers can be seen by the Department's team, who can also add their own updates. This gives a better sense of teamwork between the organisations as they collaborate towards shared goals.

"Having that visibility really improved the efficiency, and reduced resolution times to get incidents resolved," explained Chapman.

"We get monthly reports from our Data#3 customer success manager, and that tracks the number of tickets, what's outstanding, and whether any SLAs have been breached depending on the severity of the ticket. We're seeing trends and we're not seeing a spike in any type of tickets, there's a consistent downward trend with improvement on how long each takes to resolve."

In any transition of this magnitude and complexity, Chapman said that it is realistic to expect a few technical challenges to work through but thanks to experienced project managers both in-house and with Data#3, the project progressed smoothly.

"Anything that cropped up was dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There were some issues with discovering all assets in discovery, but we were able to mitigate that; we had an issues register to track issues and were able to put an action plan in place. Meaning there were no showstoppers, and that was incredibly important to us."

Chapman credited staffing and processes with helping to make the transition and ongoing management a success. He pointed out that, given every government agency operates differently, consistency of resources makes all the difference.

"We all have different processes around each area, so it takes time building up knowledge to understand the environment of each customer. We like that Data#3 brings subject matter experts to each account, rather than just a pool of Data#3 resources, so we get specialised engineers who are familiar with the education sector and environment. We're not just getting generic resources and having that first level dedicated resourcing to our account has helped familiarise them with our environment, they are not having to relearn for every request," stated Chapman.

"The way Data#3 went about the engagement was positive and professional, and the process they used was highly effective. They had a collaborative approach."

**Simon Chapman, Assistant Director,
Digital Architecture and Operations,
Department for Education South Australia.**

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"There's a learning curve and rather than having to refer to the documentation every time, we have those dedicated resources who know education, with backups when they are not available. It improves our resolution times when they don't have to relearn our environment."

Conclusion

While there are certainly many managed services options on the market, they are far from all the same. In particular, the people, processes, and systems can vary considerably. For the Department, finding the right fit has had a clear effect on reducing resolution times, but the impact goes beyond that simple measurement.

"We've got someone who is a genuine close partner rather than a general managed services provider, they want to see us succeed and set about making that happen. We have a partner at a strategic level."

"They understand our business and help us be more adaptive to change. They are service delivery focused and have the experience as a managed service partner for a large, complex environment. The local staff are very good at building relationships and communicating to keep us in the loop."

The integration between Department for Education and Data#3 systems has served to give Chapman greater insight into his environment, and his team has been quick to put that intelligence to good use.

"We have more transparency around ticketing systems and a level of visibility we have never had before due to the monitoring tools used. We can see a greater level of improved service overall. We are also more forward looking. We can make continuous improvements and use the information for road-mapping; it helps us see what the future looks like and where we can save costs or improve efficiency," outlined Chapman.

"In terms of ongoing costs, we're in a much better position. They're quite flexible about onboarding new services, around billing and invoicing."

For other organisations looking at transitioning to a new managed services provider smoothly, Chapman's advice is that it pays to allocate the right resources, who can focus fully on the task.

"As a project, don't try to do it on top of the day job. Dedicate resourcing both internally and within the provider so that you get all the prerequisites and planning done and nothing is left to chance. Work with somebody who has experience and has done multiple transitions before, so you have the comfort that they know what they are doing and have the right expertise. Do talk to their other customers – we did reference checks, who reflected positive experiences of their transitions."

Ultimately, given the importance of technology within most organisations, the role of the managed service provider is key to progress. Along with expertise, finding a strong cultural fit is worth the effort.

"I think the highlight was the proactiveness of Data#3, the way they went about the engagement was positive and professional, and the process they used was highly effective. They had a collaborative approach. I was really impressed by the partnership between the Department and Data#3 to get a positive outcome: we don't see them as simply a managed services provider, but as a strategic partner and that is the key that has set them apart," concluded Chapman.

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