

Manningham Council is shaping the council of the future

Within nine months, Manningham Council has completely shifted to next-generation technologies, which are now shaping the future of its operations.

David Bellchambers, manager information technology, Manningham Council, said, "The best way to describe what council needed to do is that it was like changing the engine of a moving truck. The council was trying to migrate all of its IT infrastructure at the back end while making it appear seamless for our end users. Due to the critical nature of

council services, it had to be a seamless transition with minimal outages during business hours.”

This is a common scenario for many major public and private-sector organisations; dependence on ongoing business continuity even while foundational business processes and tools are being transformed. For the organisation, it can feel like changing the engine on a moving truck or flying a plane as you build it.



A fast transition needed to realise business value

Councils are under constant pressure to deliver important services and demonstrate value across all areas of the community with tight budgets and timelines. Therefore, timing was crucial for Manningham Council.

David Bellchambers said, "Manningham Council's existing server and infrastructure had reached the end of its normal life span. It was time to make a strategic decision about whether to continue supporting hardware in our own data centre or take the leap into next-generation technology and Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS).

"As part of this process, the council had to determine what the future model would look like to let it scale and whether to partner with a niche provider or a larger organisation such as Microsoft.

"Ultimately, the decision was based on the council's need for a cost effective

and scalable solution to deliver business value and at a lower migration risk that a trusted partner, such as Azure, could provide."

The solution for Manningham Council featured Azure's Network as a Service (NWaaS) offering, which is a comprehensive, software-defined blend of best-of-breed cloud, network, and security technologies. Azure's NWaaS combines market-leading firewall and software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) technologies that help organisations quickly realise benefits and gain value from a hybrid cloud environment. This solution lets organisations of all sizes quickly and securely scale operations to meet changing business needs.

David Bellchambers said, "Council's solution encompassed the full scope of IaaS for its storage and network and a cloud-based firewall solution that replaced its traditional on-premises model.

"Overall, it was one of the best executed infrastructure projects that I've seen in 20 years, particularly considering the large scale and complexity of the IT involved. The Azure team was very responsive throughout this process."





Delivering the next-generation council

Local regions are rapidly growing and residents are expecting more from councils, especially when it comes to getting the information and services they need when and where they need them, in an on-demand environment. A high-speed, reliable, and highly available network is key to meeting this need.

David Bellchambers said, "Azured introduced the council to SD-WAN. Initially, we were hesitant to adopt this technology because of the reliance of important public infrastructure on the network; however, our first foray into SD-WAN has been a successful journey. It has let the council decommission the existing WAN and simplify the network arrangement while gaining a great degree of reliability with multiple carriers."

"Manningham Council now has the benefit of a simplified environment with scalable infrastructure. This has eased pressure on internal council resources because a lot of the hardware management is now conducted through Azured."

"A big benefit for the council is that, with Azured's NWaaS, it has gained enterprise-grade data centres. This new capability matches the scale and redundancy of the data centres large organisations, such as Microsoft offer, that we could never match. This gives the council a far more reliable working environment, which is much better operationally and more cost efficient."

"Through Azured, Manningham Council completely ripped and replaced its entire infrastructure across services, storage, firewalls, and the network within nine months. This is lightning fast in terms of a complete infrastructure replacement."

"It was a seamless migration, which included mentoring and support from the Azured team. Now, we spend a lot less time worrying about the hardware itself because that is completely managed for us. If the council needs to scale up services, it doesn't need to worry about space limits or hardware requirements. Previously, it would cost about \$100,000 and three months to scale IT; now this can be done in a matter of minutes."

The Azured solution lets Manningham Council focus more on new opportunities such as increasing security, growing investment in data loss prevention, and achieving even more visibility in the server environment to better manage the flow of data in and out of council.

A measure of success

David Bellchambers said, "For Manningham Council, the measure of success was that the end users didn't notice the migration other than through suddenly experiencing that the IT environment was more responsive in terms of spinning up new environments and deploying apps much faster.

"In the past, the council's IT team spent a lot of time and effort just keeping the lights on. Now, the team is freed up to generate greater business value for council.

"This is definitely a solution that can help many councils. We all provide similar services, so the lessons to be learned are equally applicable no matter the size of the council. This type of service is proving particularly valuable for Manningham Council to quickly scale up services to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population."

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