



Microsoft Customer Solution Customer Solution Case Study



Chartered Accountants
& Advisers

Overview

Country or Region: Australia
Industry: Professional Services

Customer Profile

BDO employs 900 people and provides a comprehensive range of accounting services and business advice throughout Australia.

Business Situation

Staff did not have adequate tools to make best use of the valuable intellectual property in BDO's knowledge base. This affected the company's relationship with clients and staff.

Solution

BDO's Sydney office implemented a pilot project that involved Windows Vista, the 2007 Microsoft Office System and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007. The project demonstrated the potential for dramatic improvements in productivity and staff satisfaction.

Benefits

- Efficient access to information saves up to 625 hours per week.
- Enhanced client satisfaction.
- Secure remote access.
- Greater staff retention.
- Streamlined business processes.

BDO to Save up to 625 Hours per Week with Integrated Microsoft Solution

“The 2007 Microsoft Office System, Windows Vista and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 have the potential to radically enhance our service and offerings to clients.”

Allan Granger, Partner, BDO

Scientist Carl Sagan said: “Knowing a great deal is not the same as being smart; intelligence is not information alone but also judgment, the manner in which information is collected and used.” For BDO, a business and accounting advisory service, this issue was at the root of its IT dilemma. BDO generates a great deal of intellectual property that staff could reuse when working with other clients. Many staff work onsite with clients, away from BDO's intranet, but even internal staff who had access were not using the data available to them effectively. In a pilot project, BDO and Microsoft partner Ensyst used the 2007 Microsoft® Office System, Microsoft Windows Vista™ and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 to build a set of practical and powerful information tools. Independent third-party analyst BearingPoint measured the results, finding that the Microsoft solution enabled BDO to leverage its intellectual property, work more thoroughly with clients and increase employee satisfaction.



“When clients see that BDO staff have these Microsoft tools available to them, it reassures them that they are partnering with a truly leading and modern firm.”

Allan Granger, Partner, BDO

Situation

Many businesses occasionally require a fresh eye or external perspective to help maximize their growth potential and achieve goals. This is where BDO comes in. Australia's fifth-largest multinational accounting and consulting organization, BDO has 900 employees and works across a variety of industries, offering expert advice in every major business discipline including taxation, audit and assurance services, corporate finance, IT and business recovery.

“BDO is uniquely placed to see the similarities between different industries, and how solutions usually applied to one might have value within another,” says Allan Granger, Partner, BDO.

This experience and intellectual property is encapsulated in BDO's database of casework documentation – a powerful information asset. However, the company's existing storage and retrieval system for this data was difficult to access and had only limited search capabilities.

The company used a variety of systems to manage its intellectual property, as well as functions such as scheduling, document publishing and calendaring. These applications operated as islands, with little or no integration. Some of these systems used outdated software, causing support problems.

BDO expects its staff to take a very hands-on approach when working with clients, and many advisors work onsite to immerse themselves in the day-to-day running of the client's company. This means staff are often away from the intellectual property database, which makes communication with the BDO office time-consuming and disruptive.

BDO needed more efficient information worker tools. Giving staff access to this depth

of knowledge would help them build deeper relationships with clients and be seen as valuable and trusted advisors.

While its staff turnover was below the national average, BDO saw its people as essential assets and wanted to ensure a strong level of staff retention. It was determined to create an environment where employees could achieve their full potential without being held back by substandard infrastructure.

In short, BDO's vision was to have a set of information worker tools that made information easy to find, access, share and use.

Solution

Microsoft partner Ensyst assessed BDO's existing infrastructure and devised a solution that would address its needs.

“BDO's troubles were a classic example of the issues that face information workers,” says Kim Heras, Commercial Manager of Ensyst. “The company had multiple systems for scheduling and document sharing, none of which were used universally. They needed a standard, centralized system that all employees could access at all times.”

Ensyst worked with BDO to deploy a pilot project to around 50 users across the firm, including the Corporate Finance business unit. The pilot used Beta versions of the latest Microsoft products: the Windows Vista operating system; the 2007 Microsoft Office System, including Microsoft Live Communications Server 2005 and Microsoft SharePoint® Server 2007; and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 for email and calendar functions.

“We needed an overall strategy for improving and streamlining our processes,” says

Granger. "Ensyst quickly understood what was required and we worked together to devise a solution that would bring genuine benefits to our staff."

The solution was designed to foster collaboration, helping staff work together while automating and streamlining existing business processes.

Windows Vista was the starting point for the pilot project. The operating system is designed to integrate with and enhance the functionality of the 2007 Microsoft Office System and Exchange Server 2007. Windows Vista includes data management tools such as integrated desktop search and better processes for information sharing across the network. The operating system also addresses the issue of BDO's increasingly mobile workforce, providing better security and communication for staff away from the office.

Microsoft SharePoint Server 2007, part of the 2007 release of Office, provided a portal for document and data management. It helped improve company-wide communications and streamlined business processes. Ensyst used Microsoft Live Communications Server 2005 to put together a company-only instant messaging application, allowing for immediate inter- and intra-team communication.

Finally, Ensyst used Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 to deliver complete communications and information access for staff working offsite. Exchange Server 2007 makes email, voicemail, calendars and contacts accessible from a variety of clients and devices, while maintaining a strong focus on security.

"What really appealed to us about Ensyst's solution and the new Microsoft technology was how easily it could be deployed to staff,"

says Granger. "There was nothing unfamiliar about it – it was essentially the tools we had been using, with a much greater level of functionality."

Benefits

As part of the pilot, Microsoft engaged independent business analyst and consultant BearingPoint to measure the potential impact of the Microsoft solution, particularly around the 2007 release of Microsoft Office.

BearingPoint reported that the pilot project demonstrated a number of measurable benefits.

Better Information Sharing Leads to Operational Benefits

"Almost immediately, we saw the potential benefits of giving staff the tools they needed to collaborate and access our knowledge base," says Granger.

The portal vastly reduced the time staff took to search and access information assets and gave offsite staff simple and secure remote access to the same data.

Better internal communications meant less time was spent organizing and participating in face-to-face meetings. Employees working offsite could communicate with the office quickly, without disrupting workflow. On the project management side, greater information sharing simplified the collaboration and coordination processes, also reducing the chance of human error.

Based on the pilot project, BearingPoint estimated that the solution could save staff between 188 and 625 person hours a week. This equates to savings of at least A\$300,000 each year.

In addition, reducing the cost and complexity of BDO's IT environment could generate

savings through reduced support, management and maintenance time.

A More Secure Operating System

“With Windows Vista, Microsoft has demonstrated a clear focus on security from the ground up,” said Heras. “The operating system provides new ways of protecting data, including strong user authentication features. This is essential for an organization like BDO, where much of its value is contained in the intellectual property stored on its network.”

New security features in the operating system include:

- User Account Control, which allows administrators to restrict users’ permissions to make drastic changes to the system while ensuring most applications can run.
- A powerful firewall that can be configured centrally using Group Policy settings.
- Microsoft Windows® Service Hardening that restricts the ability of malware to attack the system.
- Network Access Protection that can be configured to prevent computers from accessing the network unless they have current security updates or virus signatures.

With so much of its work now Web based, BDO was particularly impressed by the integrated features in Microsoft Internet Explorer 7.0; for example, ‘Protected Mode’, which prevents the surreptitious installation of malicious code.

“The advanced security features in Windows Vista will give employees the freedom to access and use our knowledge base over the internet without IT worrying that this access will compromise or threaten the internal network,” says Granger.

Forefront Security for Exchange Server 2007

The new security features of Windows Vista are reinforced by BDO’s use of Forefront Security for Exchange Server 2007. To protect against the latest malware and spam, this product provides on-site, server-level antivirus and anti-spam protection. All emails are scanned for viruses, so any problems are picked up before they have a chance to enter BDO’s environment.

“Rather than using a third-party application, Forefront Security is integrated with the server software, the client software and everything else,” says Heras. “Microsoft has set the standard by creating products where security is built in rather than the users having to add it on. This is a great step forward for security in IT.”

Windows Vista – Enhanced Reliability and Performance

“A key differentiator between Windows Vista and Windows XP is the built-in features of Windows Vista, which improve reliability, stability and performance,” says Heras.

Windows Vista can detect application problems and restart services without having to reboot the computer; in most cases, users will not even notice there was a problem. Improved error reporting helps developers fix common problems, leading to even more stable software in the long run. Windows Vista can even help detect and recover failing hard disks and memory.

“The more reliable the operating system is, the less time IT have to spend supporting users,” says Granger.

Improved Client Relationships Mean a Stronger Reputation

BearingPoint also found that the solution enhanced the quality of BDO’s interaction with clients.

“When clients see BDO staff using these Microsoft tools, it reassures them they are partnering with a truly leading and modern firm,” says Granger.

Clients benefit from the ability of off-site staff to communicate with office-based colleagues and databases. By speeding up the process of accessing and changing documents, staff can spend more time on other value-adding activities for the client.

The new system also helped reduce the time taken to complete client projects, enhancing BDO’s reputation and, potentially, allowing the company to serve more clients with the same number of staff.

The solution also improved BDO’s corporate compliance. The Microsoft technologies improved record and document management, allowed more secure access to documents in accordance with corporate security policies.

“The 2007 Microsoft Office System Windows Vista and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 have the potential to radically enhance our service and offerings to clients.”

Anywhere, Anytime Access with Exchange Server 2007

Exchange Server 2007 gives BDO employees anywhere, anytime access to their email, calendars and contacts from a variety of devices.

Key features of Exchange 2007 include:

- Enhanced calendaring, out-of-office, resource booking and meeting scheduling capabilities simplify collaboration and increase productivity.
- A rich experience with many of the features of Microsoft Office Outlook® from any Internet-connected computer, providing secure access to mail, calendar, contacts

and the ability to view different types of attachments.

- Exchange Server ActiveSync® technology delivers an improved Microsoft Office Outlook email and calendaring experience on mobile devices, while offering enhanced device and security policy control.

“These advanced remote access capabilities will increase the productivity of our workforce, especially when they are working onsite,” says Granger.

Staff Satisfaction and Retention

Although difficult to measure in terms of direct financial benefits, employee satisfaction and retention has a very real effect on workflow and a company’s perception in the marketplace.

“Clients can tell when staff have low job satisfaction or feel stymied by inefficient work practices,” says Granger.

By providing a powerful set of information tools, BDO eliminated many of the frustrations that could be caused by inefficient technology and demonstrated that it regarded staff as a valuable asset, sending a positive message to employees.

“While working on the project, we saw a very positive and enthusiastic response from the testers,” says Heras. “The changes the system made to the way people worked really put forward the perception of BDO being a modern and forward-looking organization.”

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Ensyst products and services, call (612) 8236 7600 or visit the Web site at: www.ensyst.com.au

For more information about BDO products and services, call (612) 9286 5445 or visit the Web site at: www.bdo.com.au

Microsoft Office System

The Microsoft Office System is the business world's chosen environment for information work, providing the programs, servers, and services that help you succeed by transforming information into impact.

For more information about the Microsoft Office System, go to: www.microsoft.com/office

Microsoft Windows Vista

Windows Vista can help your organization use information technology to gain a competitive advantage in today's new world of work. Your people will be able to find and use information more effectively. You will be able to support your mobile work force with better access to shared data and collaboration tools and your IT staff will have better tools and technologies to enhance corporate IT security, data protection, and more efficient deployment and management.

For more information about Windows Vista, go to: www.microsoft.com/windowsvista

Microsoft Server Product Portfolio

For more information about the Microsoft server product portfolio, go to: www.microsoft.com/servers/default.aspx

Software and Services

- Products
 - Microsoft Office 2007 Professional
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
 - Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005
 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2007

Hardware

- Dell servers
- HP servers
- Dell Notebooks
- Dell Desktop PCs

Partners

- Ensyst

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