

Grass Roots Group migrate to Google Apps for Business



Customer

Grass Roots Group enables organisations to reach business goals, through the provision of their services in communication, education, measurement, rewards and events, to inspire and engage employees, channel partners and customers. Founded in 1980 by David Evans and Jim White, the company has a workforce of around 1500 and over 2100 clients, including 41 of the FTSE 100, 104 of the FT Global 500.

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Increase global collaboration capabilities
- Create a reliable, scalable infrastructure
- Utilize innovative communication tools to increase efficiency

What they did

- Implemented a systematic, efficient roll out sequence to Group companies globally
- Targeted early adopters and (personal) users of Google products to champion the migration and disseminate information
- Chose Google Apps for Business as its cloud-based provider for its range of collaborative tools and its ability to unite all globally diverse Grass Roots sub-networks

What they accomplished

- Improved communication and collaboration among global employees and customers and provided a flexible environment for management
- Reduced backup time from 48 hours a week to zero days a year
- Built on-demand video conferencing suites for under £200 each (before Apps price £10,000)

Challenge

Danny Attias, Chief Information Officer has been working at Grass Roots for more than five years and instigated and managed the Google Apps migration from the beginning.

Grass Roots commenced its Google Apps project in the summer of 2011 with what can only be described as an aggressive implementation. Attias commented, there was no issue with our current supplier, the issue we had was being on-premise, "on-premise is yesterday, cloud is tomorrow".

The organization continues to see growth, however executives noticed that their collaboration capabilities lagged behind the needs of Grass Roots' global network (Grass Roots has 28 offices worldwide). The organisation suffered outages, on average one a month due to the on-premise architecture. These outages created numerous customer service issues that took up a considerable amount of administrator's time. Attias was looking for a solution that would free up his team to concentrate on strategic projects whilst having the time to think innovatively.

Solution

In an interactive session with a sceptical group of 40 users Attias asked their perceived reason behind the migration and received one answer, to save. Wrong, money was a no brainer, Google Apps for Business provided much needed "global collaboration and communication solutions, whilst reducing administration and enabling an 'any device, anytime, anywhere' policy." Within an hour all group members were Google Apps advocates with that business unit volunteering to be the pilot group. As this approach was so successful Attias used this communication strategy across all offices in the UK, (two thirds of total workforce).

The roll out sequence was systematic, efficient and effective. From idea generation in summer 2011 to a worldwide rollout in January 2012, C-level support was integral to this smooth roll out, managed by Google Enterprise Premier Partner, AppsCare. Attias directed the migration with an aim of minimal disruption to the organisation. The method he utilised identified existing (outside-of-office) Google users within the company who championed the move and disseminated information. Initially migrating employees to Gmail, Calendar and Chat, followed by Docs and Sites, allowed users to engage with the new solution and learn features in their own time.

“On-premise is yesterday, cloud is tomorrow”

Danny Attias, Chief Information Officer

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Results

With direct thanks to Google Apps for Business, Grass Roots reduced backup time from 48 hours each week to zero days a year. This helped Attias achieve his objective of freeing up IT teams to work on revenue-generating projects. Other achievements include; decommissioning nine mail servers and moving significantly more administration functions to the front line team (originally completed by second line specialists), which decreased response time and improved efficiency.

Perhaps a more incremental, but longer-term, benefit of the migration has been video conferencing (VC) within the organisation. For year's directors had asked Attias for video conferencing, which he dismissed almost immediately as costs was extortionate, approximately £10,000 per room, complex to build and operate. Now, with Google Hangouts, video conferencing is available and accessible to the entire organisation. Grass Roots have equipped meeting rooms for VC for under £200 per room and can scale this worldwide as and when demanded.

Grass Roots Group required a cloud-based contact management system to reduce overheads of maintaining an in house CRM solution. Insightly has tight integration with Google Apps --including contact and calendar sync -- and is one of the most popular CRMs on the Google Apps Marketplace due to its ease of use and affordability. Attias discovered 'Insightly' in the Google Apps Marketplace, which was easier to manage and distribute. Within just a few hours the team had researched solutions, imported all data from their previous CRM solution and deployed Insightly worldwide for a pilot with no training or support required.

Grass Roots has also found Google Sites to be of particular use within its global organisation. Attias revealed that a project for 2013 is to build one global intranet for use worldwide due to the ease of building and deploying Sites. When asked about the advantages of Sites, Attias replied, "accessibility", having Sites available direct from Gmail makes working efficient and it's also great to know Google's security is wrapped around the app.

The partnership

Attias recognises that Grass Roots Group's swift and successful migration to Google Apps for Business was due to the expertise and experience of his dedicated AppsCare® team. "...Grass Roots were there for the journey and AppsCare guided us and did the technical bits to get us over the implementation 'hump' so we didn't have to skill up just for the transition".

Attias further commented, "We have complete trust [in AppsCare®], I put my job on the line... We selected our partner very carefully, who effectively fused in and became part of the team."

When asked about support received Attias replied, "AppsCare® are hardwired into Google HQ, they provide us with just the right level of support. We ask for advice on new solutions and ways of using the products, they provide information about new features." If Grass Roots Group has a problem, AppsCare® provide the solution.