International Decision Systems (IDS) is a global provider of software and solutions for the asset finance market.

Business Challenge
With the goal of ensuring staff were able to work and communicate with each other effectively, the firm realized it needed to replace its aging, unreliable communications infrastructure.

Solution
The Softchoice Microsoft team evaluated IDS's existing environment and concluded that with a multi-site global organization, the best solution to their challenge was Office 365, a cloud based version of Microsoft Office.

Softchoice created a detailed Statement of Work outlining steps to implementation, identifying experienced project management leaders and expert technical consultants to guide IDS through the project.

Result
IDS has mail integrity on mobile devices, issues with synchronization are gone, mail flow is instant, staff always has access to their cloud based mailbox and there is much improved collaboration. Best of all this solution is 1/3 the cost of the original implementation.
Challenge

In 2005, Craig Debban, was engaged as an IT consultant at IDS. One of his key recommendations at that time was that IDS should implement Microsoft Active Directory and Office 2003 as the company’s standard communications infrastructure.

Fast forward 8 years and Debban returned to IDS, now as its Director of IT. With the goal of empowering staff to be able to work and communicate more efficiently, Debban found that the Active Directory and Office 2003 solution he recommended 8 years previously was still in place, and hadn’t been updated since implementation.

While a great choice when launched, the system wasn’t coping well with the demands of newer technologies, especially BYOD and mobility. With global offices and a growing staff, IDS’s email storage capacity was strained and email integrity and synchronization was becoming an increasingly critical issue for users.

Working with a limited IT staff, Debban was finding it difficult to support the aging email system and was receiving increasingly negative feedback from staff as they encountered more and more problems in communications.

Solution

IDS has been a Softchoice client for many years, working together to manage the company’s complex Microsoft licensing agreements.

Softchoice Account Manager Trent Jones had often heard about the company’s struggles with its existing email solution and after many conversations around options and alternatives, he suggested that Softchoice’s Microsoft consulting team might be able to provide solutions.

The Softchoice team evaluated IDS’s existing environment and concluded that with a multi-site global organization, the best solution would be Office 365, a cloud based version of the familiar Microsoft Office, incorporating Lync communications and Exchange Online and capable of managing advanced communication demands.

The team outlined a detailed project management plan, transition strategies and an in-depth cost benefit analysis. Office 365 would answer all the challenges IDS was facing with their existing system but Debban says “I told Softchoice that if we move forward, I want your best people for this project, they must be very knowledgeable and able to quickly implement the solution we have agreed upon.”

“Having that clear path documented took a lot of pressure off us. Softchoice provided us with the plan and the steps they would take and then followed up on everything including providing dedicated experts to ensure that what was in the plan actually happened on schedule.”

- Craig Debban, Director of IT, IDS

Some of the highlights of the solution include:

- 260 mailboxes migrated equaling about 2 terabytes of information
- 14 terabytes of mail storage
- An upgrade plan that cost 65% less than the previous global mail upgrade
- Data loss prevention and security compliance tools embedded in the solution
- Repurposing 5 large enterprise class servers and their storage space for critical initiatives
- Mail with an Outlook client that DOES NOT require a VPN connection
- The use of Office 2013 without compatibility issues
- A fully functional Outlook Web client from any browser
- 25 gigabyte (GB) mailbox size in Office 365 for each user
- Exchange ActiveSync to receive email on mobile devices
Results

In order to ensure IDS was comfortable with the transition, Softchoice provided a very detailed Statement of Work outlining the implementation in detail and identifying experienced project management leaders and expert technical consultants to oversee the project. “Having that clear path documented took a lot of pressure off us” says Debban. “Softchoice provided us with the plan and the steps they would take and then followed up on everything including providing dedicated experts to ensure that what was in the plan actually happened on schedule.”

The plan called for a phased migration starting with an initial pilot group to test the environment and ensure that everything was working perfectly. The team first built an Exchange 2010 Hybrid server to provide co-existence between Office 365 and the On-Premise Exchange environment, then migrated users to the cloud, without impacting their services.

With success achieved in the pilot, IDS felt empowered by Softchoice’s training and documentation to continue the migration across the company themselves, but was free to call on Softchoice for assistance, if they encountered any bumps in the road.

The success of the project meant that users mobile devices were working reliably and the synchronization of their email systems backed up properly. Users also enjoyed the latest versions of exchange as well as free Cloud Blackberry services for users of BlackBerry devices. There were also substantial savings in Office 365 per user/per mailbox costs and dramatically reduced costs on email server support.

“The benefits have been huge” says Debban, “We have mail integrity on mobile devices now, issues with synchronization are gone, mail flow is instant, staff always has access to their cloud based mailbox and we are seeing the benefits of improved collaboration. Best of all this solution is 1/3 the cost of our original implementation 8 years ago, not even counting the savings in power, space and cooling.”