Business Challenge

Although they wouldn't know it, attendees of some of the largest shows and entertainment venues of the world have all been touched—behind the scenes—by Outbox Technology. The Montreal-based company provides an easy-to-use platform for ticket sales incorporating state-of-the-art features such as interactive maps, 3D venue plans and single-page checkouts.

Since its 2006 launch, the company has become ticket-seller of choice for promoters, venues and artists the world over. The solution's seamlessness has helped clients sell more than $1 billion a year.

In recent years, the company's explosive business growth saw staffing climb from only around 60 to approximately 200 employees, leading it to take a good hard look at its email systems, according to Yanick Cyr, the company's IT Director.

"When I joined the company, the internal mail server was simple and served us okay," Cyr said. "But that was because we didn't need features like shared calendars or more advanced collaboration capabilities. That changed as we grew."

The company, which runs a bulk of its services on open source Linux machines, evaluated a number of solutions, including open source options like Zimbra and Open Office, but ultimately determined Office 365 would best meet its emerging needs.

"Technology is the driving force of our company," Cyr said. "Even though I come from an open source background and many of our systems are Linux, it became clear that Office 365 was the obvious choice for us."

Office 365 would allow the company to place its focus where it was most needed, Cyr explained.

"We are a technology company—around 60 or 70 percent of all employees, and our founders have technology backgrounds—but our attention needs to be on development," Cyr said. Migrating to Office 365 afforded the company with that ability to focus on this core-competency.

Alongside Outbox's growth, the ticket sales industry has also rapidly evolved forcing the company to adopt ever-more agile, customer-driven software development. "Five years ago, no one was talking about mobile sales, or looking at how customers can share ticket purchases. We now need our focus on development in order to quickly adapt to the new customer requirements that come about every year," Cyr suggested.

The company must also respond to the wild fluctuations of the sports and entertainment industry. Cyr pointed to an upcoming visit of Céline Dion to Montreal's Bell Centre as an example: "We will have an extraordinarily high server load when her tickets are on sale, maybe 10 times what it might be other times."

"So we need to be that much more agile and more flexible."

For Outbox this meant not dedicating resources to areas of IT that are unrelated to meeting customer needs or creating revenue growth. With that in mind, he said moving to Office 365 and the migration to the cloud was perfectly aligned with its mission.

"We don't want to have to hire someone to manage an exchange server when our job is to sell tickets, not manage email."

Case Study Snapshot:

Outbox Technology improves its ability to support increased users mail and collaboration needs, while increasing its ability to focus on core business, by migrating to Microsoft Office 365 with Softchoice Keystone support.

Client Profile:

Outbox Technology provides entertainment and sports venues with a sophisticated ticket selling tool that features interactive seat maps, 3D customized venue plans and one-page checkout. The company examines how consumers act and react online and leverages that information to find customized, innovative ways to help its clients to better compete and sell out their events.

Softchoice Solution

The company turned to Softchoice, with which it had previously worked for two years supporting its Cisco network appliances. The excellence in prior service helped to cinch the decision. . "I did my homework, and once I knew Office 365 was the right solution to meet our needs to better collaborate, I reached out to Softchoice immediately."

Lacking Microsoft specialists of its own, Outbox turned to Softchoice, first as an Office 365 enterprise customer and then—after a business decision to separate into two corporate entities—as a Keystone for Office 365 customer. Through the Keystone service, Outbox is provided with managed services and support, and rich analytics and mentorship to help the company make the most of its investment. End-user support requests are off-loaded to Softchoice's Keystone team.

Along with Softchoice, Outbox developed a strategy for the easiest and most efficient migration path from its more "classical" mail server—which also included a number of disjointed platforms—to Office 365 and the cloud. Softchoice then helped the company manage the transition.

"I'm very happy with the support Softchoice has provided," Cyr said. "We had some issues around email forwarding when we split the company, and we were able to contact Keystone, and let them escalate to Microsoft to solve the problem."

"When we contact Keystone it's quick, and solutions are provided in only a couple hours, or immediately if, for example, we have a question about configuration. They do their job really well because they know the product like we never could."

> " Working with Softchoice is probably the greatest decision we could have made. They provide the Microsoft expertise we need to expand our team without taking resources away from our core mission of serving our clients' needs. "

Business Outcomes

While the killer app for users has been shared calendar and improved collaboration, Cyr noted the primary benefit for the IT team has been a dramatic reduction in help desk calls.

As the company's business (and employee numbers) grew, so too did the number of help desk tickets. Migrating to Office 365 has turned that around—while ticket sales are up, help desk tickets have dropped off.

"Most of the time I actually have to remind myself that we're even on Office 365, because everything runs so well that we don't get help desk requests," he said. "Before, even with our simple SMTP server, we'd have at least one help ticket a week associated with mail; now I see none."

"The only thing we see is the enthusiasm of employees around the new things they can do in Outlook or using the Office 365 portal to collaborate. The difficult thing, the management of the infrastructure around it, is gone."

Although focused primarily on mail today, Cyr sees the Office 365 deployment as the potential foray into greater collaboration and is also investigating the possibility of migrating Outbox's data to OneDrive.