Azure

CASE STUDY

PUTTING THE RISK OF DISASTER ON LOCKDOWN

DolcoBIZ is an IT consultancy that has served businesses along the Dolphin Coast of KwaZulu-Natal for the last 20 years.

Specialising in custom IT solutions, DolcoBIZ's in-house consultants have many years of experience which they use to tailor solutions to their clients' exact requirements.

While the company's historical focus has been on the Microsoft stack, in the past few years this has expanded into assisting its customers to embrace the many benefits that the Microsoft cloud stack has to offer, whether that's through licensing products such as M365 or leveraging cloud infrastructure for their line of business systems and other core IT needs.

@dolcoBIZ
TOWARDS THE FUTURE

/THE CHALLENGE>

One of DolcoBIZ's many clients is Siza Water, a company that provides water and wastewater management to the Dolphin Coast. DolcoBIZ has been their preferred IT provider for the past six years.

At the beginning of 2020, Siza Water was evaluating its current IT infrastructure and weighing it up against what the cloud could do for them. It had already moved almost 80 users over to Office 365 two years prior with DolcoBIZ's help, and the transition had proven both easy and beneficial.

Initially, the company was interested in the cloud for disaster recovery and backup for business continuation purposes. As they investigated more, it became apparent that they could move much of their on-premises infrastructure into the cloud and get the backup and disaster recovery benefits they needed at the same time.

After a two-month investigation into their options, the company settled on using Microsoft's Azure cloud for their purposes, as Microsoft's Hyper-cloud environment offered everything Siza Water was looking for – including excellent service and support via DolcoBIZ, backed by Tarsus On Demand.

The proposed migration to the cloud would see Siza Water moving its core line-of-business system – EDAMS – to Azure and then create a disaster recovery environment for its domain controller to ensure business continuity in the event of an unforeseen problem.

siza water
A SAWW Company

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Says Adhir Maharaj, MD of DolcoBIZ, "The fact that Azure offers disaster recovery and backup along with the other services Siza Water was looking at ticked all the right boxes. This, and the fact that I knew I could count on Tarsus On Demand to provide excellent support via their talented engineers, were the deciding factors in the company choosing to go this route."

/THE SOLUTION>

While the migration was due to take place in a slow, measured fashion, when the COVID-19 lockdown level 5 was announced in South Africa, it became clear that Siza Water's operations would be impacted by its staff not being able to work from its office.

It's then that DolcoBIZ, supported by Tarsus On Demand, sprung into urgent action to migrate EDAMS to the cloud as matter of urgency.

The entire migration, including allowing EDAMS's development team in Greece the ability to make some configuration changes to the instance took place over the Easter long-weekend in 2020.

> **...on the very next working day, it was business as usual – but this time, from the cloud.**

When the long weekend was over, Siza's systems were live in the cloud and its core team of 30 staff could do what they needed to from their home office environments.

The biggest challenge, says Maharaj, was the technical complexity of the connectivity and configuration required. Working with fibre provider partners to configure DNS gateways and firewalls, these complexities were ironed out over the course of the long weekend.

Cutover was immediate: the new Azure servers took over the second the on-premises servers were switched off.

Following on from that successful migration, DolcoBIZ and Tarsus On Demand then undertook the deployment of a disaster recovery environment for Siza Water's domain controller.

"This way Siza Water was able to leverage the robust and resilient Azure cloud environment for its day-to-day needs – and in doing so reduce downtime – while tackling its disaster recovery needs at the same time," Maharaj adds.

Another long weekend was chosen for this migration and to Siza's satisfaction, on the very next working day, it was business as usual – but this time, from the cloud.

/CUSTOMER BENEFITS>

In the time since the servers went live, Siza Water has not experienced any downtime whatsoever, on either its DC or its EDAMS accounting software server.

The reliability of the Azure cloud, coupled with the performance it offers, has also led to improved efficiencies within the business, allowing Siza Water to make and receive payments easily and on time.

DolcoBIZ also implemented secure access to Siza Water's Azure-based resources. Now, staff need to use a VPN to connect to the business network, and only once their identities have been verified are they granted access to what they need. This has helped the company with its Work from Home implementation, as workers can now do what they need to do remotely, and the business doesn't need to worry about security.

"As a provider of essential water services, we needed to have access to our systems so as not to jeopardise the quality of our services during the lockdown, especially Level 4 and 5," says Shyam Misra, MD of Siza Water.

"Migrating to Azure has provided us with the remote access to our systems on a 24 hour basis, and we work seamlessly no matter where we are. The move to the Azure platform was undertaken efficiently and has met all of our expectations to ensure we have a secure platform that provides us the flexibility we need to run our business," Shyam adds.

Being in Azure also helped make Siza Water's use of EDAMS better. "Previously, the EDAMS developers – who are based in Greece – would need to log into Siza Water's on-premises

EDAMS server using TeamViewer," says Maharaj. "Now, thanks to the cloud, they can work on EDAMS directly inside Azure. This has helped tremendously with new feature implementation and the maintenance work that's needed."

Maharaj adds "It has allowed us to do more for Siza Water remotely. Thanks to the move to Azure, we don't need to be on-site to assist them with IT queries anymore."

Lilly Rajah, Customer Services Manager at Siza Water, says that "The migration to the Cloud has allowed staff the flexibility to work remotely, especially during the lockdown. As a result, we were able to provide an uninterrupted service and expand on digitalisation; we have introduced the EasyPay method of payment linked to the current software to enhance collections; and we are working on an upgrade of the current billing software to provide a self-service facility for the customers and an integrated system amongst departments to improve efficiency."

The biggest benefit however is that Siza Water has now improved its resilience to all forms of future challenges.

"Should another lockdown come along, Siza Water is prepared to weather that storm," Maharaj says.

/THE TARSUS ON DEMAND DIFFERENCE>

DolcoBIZ and Tarsus On Demand have been doing business together for nearly two years, and in that time, have formed a close working relationship.

"Having Tarsus On Demand to lean on for technical support and advice on this project is another factor that contributed to Siza Water saying yes," says Maharaj. "They are the best in the biz when it comes to implementing and supporting Azure-based solutions. That's why I've worked to get as many of my customers onto Azure as I can over the past two years - I know I can rely on them to help me get the job done, and done well."

Siza Water still has on-premises infrastructure for other functions, but thanks to the success of their DC and EDAMS migrations, they're looking to move those into Azure as well in time.

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