

Shellharbour City Council achieves significant efficiencies thanks to strategic roadmap

Shellharbour, located 100 kilometres from Sydney, Australia, is home to 65,000 people. The Shellharbour Local Government area aims to be dynamic and responsive, working with the community to deliver programs that foster a safe, healthy, informed and caring community, and building a strong and diverse local economy.

Challenge

Prior to 2012, Shellharbour City Council's IT team was consumed by the day to day operations of IT, busy keeping the lights on, leaving no time to focus on the strategic issues the Council was facing. The situation meant that Shellharbour was not making the best use of their budget, and IT was adding very little value in terms of the services delivered to the greater Council team.

With no focus on forward planning, Shellharbour was missing out on opportunities to save costs, innovate and develop services more aligned to business requirements.



Marcos Baez, IT Manager for Shellharbour City Council, said, "The IT team was stuck in a cycle of break-fix after break-fix without ever being able to step back and find out why things weren't working and how we could put a plan in place to fix our issues from the root cause.

"In the past we would simply react to issues. For example, a staff member may say they needed more storage, so we would invest in more storage. But we couldn't see whether the need for storage was a long-term one that necessitated a larger investment, or whether it was a short-term one that could be achieved with a cheaper or alternative solution. Budgets were a challenge because we couldn't realistically plan even the next three months, let alone the next year. Also, the business did not understand how the IT spend aligned with the broader Council strategy".

Shellharbour City Council needed to transform the IT function from a reactive operationally-focused function to a proactive and strategic service.

Solution

Thomas Duryea Logicalis (TDL) worked with Shellharbour City Council to develop a joint strategic roadmap that would allow the IT team to switch its focus from keeping the lights on to planning for the future.

TDL began the process by agreeing three key initiatives with Shellharbour:

- Modernise the IT environment
- Optimisation and efficiency
- Improved functionality

“The strategy and roadmap development project saw us start from scratch. Thomas Duryea Logicalis helped us conduct workshops with different stakeholder groups within the Council so that we could develop goals and a detailed roadmap to achieve them. We communicated this new direction to the entire Council staff so that they understood what we were working towards.”

From that moment on, every project the IT team undertook needed to fulfil one of these initiatives. Next, the team introduced guiding principles to keep the initiatives on track. These included leveraging existing investments and consolidating systems where possible.

Benefits

The benefits Shellharbour has achieved from working with TDL to implement a clear strategic roadmap include:

- Significant cost and time savings in daily operations as there are fewer issues that need to be solved immediately, due to better forward-planning
- Easier budget approvals because funds are not required simply to keep the status quo but to improve and modernise systems
- Visibility into how current IT issues can be resolved through working towards longer-term goals, saving time and money
- Faster service provisioning because of streamlined and modernised systems.

Marcos Baez said, “This strategic approach has simplified the environment and given the IT team a clear direction. Instead of scrambling to respond to issues as they arise, we can now take a proactive approach that will significantly reduce these issues in the future.

“One of the most important factors in the way TDL worked was that they facilitated extensive consultation and engagement with senior management, which had not really happened before. By getting their buy-in and endorsement of the plan, we could be more confident of success. It also gave the management team more faith that the IT team is spending its budget wisely and in the most effective way, which in turn makes it easier to get funding approved for specific projects.”

The strategic plan covers the next three years and includes long-term objectives such as moving as much of the workload as possible to the cloud to save costs. It also includes short-term priorities that need to be satisfied.

Shellharbour City Council’s IT team can now provide a better service to its customers. While in the past even simple requests such as installing software or rebuilding a computer could take weeks or longer, in many instances these requests are satisfied on the same day.