

ICT Renewal Project Builds Collaboration Western Australian Institute of Sport

A complete infrastructure refresh by the WA Institute of Sport has released the handbrake on collaboration and IT performance.



The Western Australian Institute of Sport (WAIS) is responsible for delivering programs that support professional athletes, with training and facilities that help them compete at the highest levels.

Over the years, they have grown from a crew of 10 full-time staff to a reputable team of 75 dedicated professionals. Reflecting this growth, WAIS has also changed their image, with new premises to house their growing project and support needs.

One area that was lagging was their ICT infrastructure. Damien Fitzpatrick, Corporate Services Manager at WAIS, explained that their ICT infrastructure was starting to slow down productivity. The legacy servers and Citrix environment that had once enabled efficient workflows at WAIS were now acting as barriers to efficiency and collaboration.

Damien explains: "Our colleagues in the AIS and abroad were using tools like Office 365 to collaborate and share work processes. WAIS was using thin clients connected to assets on a local network."

Not only did this make it hard to collaborate externally, but WAIS was struggling to maintain efficient workflows internally. In short, their ICT infrastructure was starting to act as a handbrake on their performance.



Damien Fitzpatrick • 3rd+ 🌐



What did you do during the pandemic? At WAIS we jumped headfirst into the biggest upgrade to our ICT infrastructure in 10+ years setting our organisation up for the next 10. A project that many organisations would take years to deliver and sink hundreds of thousands of dollars on, we completed in less than six months on an extremely lean budget.

- Upgraded to Windows 10
- Retired Thin Clients
- Migrated to new MSP
- Upgraded the Fibre
- Installed a new Firewall
- Fast-tracked Teams rollout

- Licensed and released  Microsoft 365
- Migrated our Exchange emails
- Upgraded the email signature client
- Migrated co-located Servers to First Focus Cloud
- Decommissioned legacy servers
- Set up Multi-Factor Authentication
- Established OneDrive

→ ...about to release SharePoint and shut down Citrix

Defining the gold standard

Damien was keen to get WAIS to transform away from legacy applications and platforms to a cloud-based model. Managing the ageing IT hardware took time away from their core responsibilities – time that could be better-spent training champions.

Damien knew that WAIS was in dire need of immediate IT improvements, and set about planning a full analysis covering:

- ✓ in-house infrastructure.
- ✓ a wish-list of what they wanted to be able to do.
- ✓ the systems and infrastructure they needed to make it happen.

A business systems renewal project of this scope needs careful management, and Damien elected to partner with an MSP to help him make the changes necessary for future growth.

“IT is not our core business” he explained.

A leap of faith

Working with First Focus, Damien laid out a three-stage plan. This ambitious undertaking involved:

- ✓ the staged migration of users to the **cloud** with **enhanced cybersecurity** measures.
- ✓ replacing thin-client access with cloud-based apps like **Office 365**, OneDrive, and SharePoint.
- ✓ upgrading from old hardware to new infrastructure in scalable stages.

Of utmost importance to Damien was the capacity of their MSP. WAIS needed to have confidence in the people, their knowledge, and experience.

[Our MSP] needed to make commitments that were backed up. First Focus is secure and growing. They were already doing this work for over 150 clients.



“It was a leap of faith, moving to First Focus in the way we did,” explained Damien.

“But we needed that specialist skillset to build for future needs. 2020 has been wild. I thought if we don’t do it now, who knows what’s going to happen in 12 months time?”

Crossing the finish line

The timeline was ambitious. But Damien had confidence in the project schedule and its outcomes.

“We started the transition in April 2020. No one was in the office thanks to the COVID-19 lockdown. We were all working from home. The fact that it was all done during this period is doubly impressive.”

By the end of July 2020, WAIS had finished their onboarding process and migrated all its managed services. Its users now had secure access to cloud-based infrastructure, Microsoft 365, OneDrive, and SharePoint – without having to rely on thin clients. Emails were set up, signatures verified, firewalls deployed. Cloud backups were planned, and a VPN solution would support secure access to data and applications for employees making use of work-from-home arrangements.

By February 2021, the hardware replacement project was finalised and the decommissioning process completed. WAIS was finally ready to tackle whatever the future brought – pandemic lockdowns included.

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According to Damien, the speed and care taken during the transition was a big win for WAIS, with teams identifying issues before they developed and solving them proactively.

“First Focus brings a level of responsiveness and personalization we didn’t know we needed. We get quarterly business reviews full of forward-looking projects. They’re quite helpful from an ICT perspective, and a big improvement on our expectations.”

I can be confident that daily stuff is just taken care of - no need to intervene. Now I can look forward.



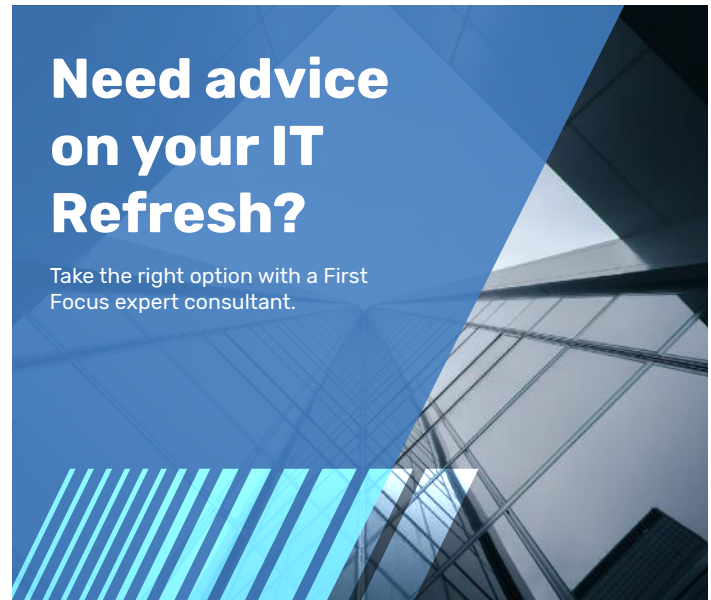
Rewarding Results

An internal survey found that staff response to the speedy project was “quite positive”. WAIS employees said that the business systems renewal project had lessened their IT issues while increasing their escalation options.

Damien is now confident that WAIS has future-facing systems in place: “Without worrying about ICT, we’re free to do more interesting things.”

“We’ve got the base in place - it’s set and forget.”

“The handbrake is off.”



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