

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Microsoft 365 Drives Cloud Security for Global Scuba Gear Manufacturer

Background


Since 2011, Huish Outdoors has been passionate about fueling the human spirit for adventure while connecting people, getting them active, exploring and enjoying the world's outdoor environments, both above and below the surface. The Salt Lake City, UT, company specializes in the manufacturing, distribution and sale of scuba diving equipment with six satellite branches across the globe. In many cases, Huish Outdoors is the lone qualified provider of diving products.



Huish Outdoors acquired well-known brands in the diving industry since 2011. The company's strategy has allowed them to expand their product portfolio and market presence in the outdoor and diving equipment sector and has spurred substantial growth during the past decade.

Controlling a Chaotic Infrastructure

As the company continued to expand, it struggled to manage its data without best practice guidance for email and document management and related security protocols. The company was using Google Workspace as its collaboration and communication platform. In addition, many employees had created their own Dropbox accounts and were sharing files with both clients and other employees without any oversight. It was a mounting concern—the disconnected systems were increasing the company's IT costs in administration and infrastructure maintenance and putting them at risk, said Huish Outdoors' Director of Information Technology, Stanley Ferguson. "It was a wild, wild west mentality." And without a centralized team, the company regularly had to bring in third-party consultants to fix ad-hoc issues. And that was getting costly.



“ We had to get our hands around controlling our own assets and making sure we could manage data as people came and went, making sure we didn't lose data or assets.

*Stanley Ferguson,
Director of Information Technology*

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MA Partnership Based on Trust

Huish Outdoors needed a new communication and collaboration solution, one with built-in security that would scale over the next five to ten years. They also needed assistance in creating a governance infrastructure for all their data that would meet their changing needs, ensure compliance, and reduce IT's workload.

Ferguson knew it would take a trustworthy, qualified partner with security expertise to guide Huish Outdoors. He interviewed other vendors and settled on JourneyTeam as the right fit for the company. "JourneyTeam has the right experience to make sure we meet all our company's needs. It was an easy decision," he said, noting that he had engaged with JourneyTeam on past projects for other employers and had always had a positive outcome.

A Secure, Scalable Solution

With JourneyTeam's guidance, Huish Outdoors quickly determined that they needed to move from Google to Microsoft 365 technologies, due to the extensive app suite including email (Outlook), file storage and collaboration (OneDrive and SharePoint) and productivity tools (Word, Excel, PowerPoint). As a bonus, Microsoft 365 also included communication through Teams, and data analysis through Power BI.

In lock step with the migration, they needed to deploy security and compliance in the new solution areas and Microsoft 365 provided the built-in toolset to do exactly that.

That need for immediate protection became critically evident when Huish Outdoors worked with Apple to create and launch the world's first dive computer app for the Apple Watch Ultra, sparking widespread interest and fueling growth of the sport. The product was launched during an Apple keynote address, and afterward Huish Outdoors was "spammed galore" with hundreds of emails that appeared to be legitimate but weren't, Ferguson said.

With Apple's product launch, the new product generated significant public interest and made Huish Outdoors keenly aware of the windows of vulnerability in their systems, and the potential for a data leak that could have long-term consequences.



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Change Management

Huish Outdoors needed to decommission Google Workspace and transition to the appropriate Microsoft 365 environment, moving user emails, contacts, and calendar events into Microsoft Exchange Online. At the same time, files stored in both Google Drive and Dropbox needed to be transferred into Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint.

Ferguson said it was important to cut off employees' access to Google Workspace and Dropbox promptly to prevent data fragmentation and unauthorized usage.

But first they had to educate and prepare the company— enter JourneyTeam's proven adoption and change management framework. JourneyTeam's migration experts ensured Huish Outdoors was prepared for the shift, with internal communications, tailored and department specific end user training, realistic expectation setting, and a roll out that brought no surprises. All this helped to foster a positive outlook.

Once the data migration was complete: the project included:

- Converting personal licenses to business licenses
- Implementing Microsoft Teams
- Structuring data in the SharePoint intranet site with the proper controls

"The integration of tools like Teams has made it so much easier for our geographically dispersed team to work together, and the security features give us the peace of mind to manage sensitive client information with confidence," he said.

Security

Huish Outdoors was intent on making the most of Microsoft 365's security with its built-in threat protection, data loss prevention and identity management features. That focus started by establishing a Zero Trust security strategy that put equal focus on identities and endpoints, two powerful ways to control access data. "We knew that we would be placing identity at the heart of our trust-but-verify approach, and that made conditional access, multifactor authentication, privileged identity management incredibly important to us," Ferguson said.

JourneyTeam further refined the company's email security, implementing Defender for Office 365, which integrates with Exchange Online to protect email communications by scanning incoming and outgoing emails for malicious content, attachments, and links. Defender also scans files uploaded to SharePoint, OneDrive, and Teams for malware.

And because Defender integrates with Microsoft Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory) for identity-based protection, Ferguson's IT team can suspend user accounts as part of its automated response capabilities. "Now if a bad actor tries to authenticate as an employee, we immediately see that in our environments; we can respond and automatically shut down access," Ferguson said.

Because of the security foundation put in place, Ferguson said, they have reduced phishing and spam by 75 percent.

All up, Huish Outdoors has a highly secure virtual workspace with Microsoft 365. They are safeguarding email and protecting endpoints with Microsoft Defender for Office 365. "We now have the pieces in place to help the company as a whole and better protect us," Ferguson said.

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Streamlining Device Management

Because Microsoft 365 easily scales, adding new-users, licenses, or features were streamlined for Huish Outdoors. The company combined the power of Entra ID (formerly Azure Active Directory) with Microsoft Intune and has slashed the time needed to provision new devices by more than two-thirds. It is an enormous benefit for a small team that previously had to manually set up each device before shipping it.

Now Intune automatically builds new devices to standards set by the IT team. All that saved time adds up, enabling IT staff to focus on priority projects like the full transition to the cloud identity and access management. “Before, I had to do this manually for each and every machine,”

Ferguson said. “It has saved me hours and hours.”

Like all of Microsoft’s integrated security products, Intune is enabled by the scale and intelligence of the Microsoft Cloud, which allows it to deliver stronger device security and compliance as an essential part of a Zero Trust architecture.

Having the right tools and the access that Microsoft provides -that Google did not - makes “our lives a lot easier from an IT perspective,” Ferguson said. Microsoft 365 also provides a dedicated portal (Microsoft 365 Admin Center) for administering all aspects of the organization’s services. “There’s a lot of reasons for security with Microsoft. One is having a central tool that we can manage ourselves and better support the company.”

An Ongoing Partnership

Huish Outdoors now has a secure and modern platform, and a baseline security posture for incident response. As cybercriminals and their techniques evolve, and as Microsoft continues to expand its security portfolio with continual updates, the company’s team must continually adapt, too. With those dynamics in mind, Huish Outdoors and JourneyTeam continue to work together to fortify the company’s defenses and stay on top of the evolving landscape.

Ferguson said he uses JourneyTeam as a sounding board and strategic advisor, meeting every few weeks for coaching and guidance. “It’s one of those environments where it feels like you’re collaborating with a partner that has all the knowledge, capabilities and connections within Microsoft to help guide us in making the right decisions,” Ferguson said.

Hector Perez, JourneyTeam’s Senior Solution Architect for Microsoft Modern Work, added: “We know we’ve been successful when clients keep coming back, and Huish Outdoors has been a testament to that. They see us as a trusted strategic advisor because we repeatedly bring value.”

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Key Outcomes

- **Productivity:** Rapid policy deployment, enhanced application management, and remote device control leading to streamlined operations.
- **Scalability:** Simplified administration through the Microsoft 365 Admin Center makes it easier for IT teams to manage users, subscriptions, and services as the organization scales.
- **Cost Savings:** Reduced IT costs from licensing and hardware to IT management and support.

LET'S TALK!

Today's teams need tools and technology like Microsoft 365 to streamline collaboration and file management, helping teams work as though they are just a few feet away, even when they may be continents apart.

JourneyTeam can help you look at your business from end-to-end, and do so while incorporating adoption, governance, and security. If you're considering a migration to Microsoft 365, or need a security assessment, we'd love to talk with you. Take this opportunity to benefit from JourneyTeam's deep experience with digital transformation for growing businesses.

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