Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga Gears up for Growth with YORB, Microsoft Azure and Office 365.

Mauri ora ki te mana Māori
Strong Whānau, Vibrant Communities

The Hawke's Bay-based organisation is both a political-leadership entity for its region, and a provider of high-quality health, social and education services to more than 12,000 people, mainly through government-funded contracts.

The number of people seeking care and support from Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga (TToH) continues to grow, and is expected to reach 20,000 within the next five years.

Its contracts cover medical, dental and mental healthcare; family support, parenting education, youth development, drug and alcohol therapies within prisons and community-based. It provides school nurses, antenatal courses, child development teams and community nursing.

Residential facilities are provided for young parents with new babies, seniors, unwell people, and women rebuilding their lives.

TToH works across a wide geographical area along the east coast of the North Island, from Mahia to southern Wairarapa.

TToH is now also tackling the housing crisis affecting so many of our people, by building a whole new suburb of 130 high-quality, versatile and affordable homes at Waingākau Village on the western edge of Flaxmere.

"We're into quite a lot of things," says TToH IT Manager Teriwa Graham. "We keep growing and growing, and our IT needs are diverse."

"Scalability and agility are the catch cry for fast growing organisations everywhere. Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga is no exception," says CEO George Reedy.

Te Taiwhenua o
HERETAUNGA

TE TAIWHENUA O HERETAUNGA CASE STUDY

That can prove a challenge on the IT front, particularly for a not-for-profit organisation such as TToH. It has a new organisational business strategy and wanted an IT strategy to support its business plans.

"There were a lot of pain points. Our servers were slow and causing frustration for staff," Graham says.

"Our servers and infrastructure went down for a whole week. The business cost for the GPs alone would have been phenomenal."

The IT team's typical morning ritual was a walk through the medical clinic to resolve any issues before GP consultations began.

"We were growing rapidly, and our previous IT provider was quite little, so there could have been a lack of understanding of how to scale with our continuous growth," she says.

"It was a struggle to see new opportunities, so our IT team wasn't able to think 'what if' - what if we didn't need to be at our desk to enter notes, what if we became a mobile workforce. There were some strict boundaries on what we could and couldn't do."

James Waldron, YORB Sales Manager, sums it up succinctly: "The environment they had just wasn't fit for purpose. It wasn't created with their business in mind, so it didn't have the agility and scalability they required."

The old solution was hosted on the previous service provider's premises and utilising thin clients to connect in. Waldon says because of the service provider's size, they were struggling to cope with TToH's growth.

TToH went to market for a new solution.

More than just an IT solution

"We were looking for someone who could support us to be scalable; who would have the knowledge and be a good fit for us; who we could have an awesome working relationship with, and who would understand our cultural needs as well as our organisational needs," Graham says.

"And we wanted someone who could give advice and steer us toward technological options that would not only help staff to do their job, but to enable and support our organisation in the development of its business"

That fits neatly with YORB's philosophy.

"We pride ourselves on the fact that we don't just talk technology. We talk about people's business and understand the business issues and pain points, then translate that into technology," Waldron says.

"YORB's tagline is business defined technology."

YORB quickly identified that taking the workloads to Microsoft Azure would give TToH much more scalability and deliver immediate benefits.

For an organisation that hadn't previously been exposed to cloud IT, and which had such a diverse range of technological requirements, the move to cloud was a big step.

"Because we are so diverse and have a range of different services here, there was a lot to consider. If we were a medical practice on its own, you know what you can or can't do with IT – the data, the storage, encryption etc. For us, there were a lot of factors to consider across a lot of different services," Graham says.

YORB were "very proactive" about supporting TToH throughout the process and answering questions. "When necessary, they were more than happy to go back to the drawing board and realign what they were proposing."

Any security and regulatory concerns held by TToH were quickly resolved, thanks to the Ministry of Health's official acceptance of Microsoft Trusted Public Cloud services, including Azure and Office 365.

YORB proposed a complete lift and shift of TToH's entire system, which included 11 virtual servers, to Azure and the use of the Office 365 productivity suite.

A Fortinet virtual firewall sits in front of the TToH servers, adding additional protection, with private virtual leased lines running from Azure to TToH to ensure communication is encrypted end-to-end.

"A lot of other providers proposed reducing the amount of Terminal Servers, to reduce costs. What I liked about YORB was they encouraged us to take everything to the cloud. That way, we would know nothing would break, the transition would be smooth, data accessible from anyone and we could work together to resolve all the other historic issues."

Cutover to the new Azure system was scheduled for 8am on a Monday. While it was completely seamless for TToH staff, that belies the work that went on in the background.

"We had prepared the Azure environment, copied everything from their service provider across and pre-tested everything so we knew when we flicked the switch it would work, and it did," Waldron says.

"It's stable"

While the benefits have been different for every service, the increased stability is key and with that has come improved staff morale.

"Staff are certain now that when they come into the office that they can log into their computer; it won't be slow or randomly shut down, which used to cause a lot of frustration, Graham says.

YORB provide service desk support, but also use software to proactively seek out problems before they occur, further ensuring stability.

The move to cloud means staff are now able to be more mobile, accessing the system while out of the office if desired.

Some staff working from TToH's fifteen remote sites, which have IT set up, can now log in and complete work from there rather than returning to the two main offices.

TToH has built its own intranet, based on SharePoint. "This is where we see ourselves in future." It's providing the organisation with greater flexibility and fewer headaches.

"No one likes going into a document and it's read only because another person is using it." With SharePoint, multiple users can access and work on a document - without resulting in multiple versions of the same document.

Adding collaboration – and new services

Microsoft's Teams unified communications platform which includes chat, video, file storage and application integration, is also being harnessed.

TToH has been trialing integration of its own teams for around three years, bringing together specialists from a range of fields to provide holistic, wraparound models of care and support for families. This helps to minimise the number of times that clients need to "tell their story". It creates a better experience for them, and efficiencies within workflows.

"Ideally, this is how we want the whole organisation to work in the future: Across services, across teams, collaborating"
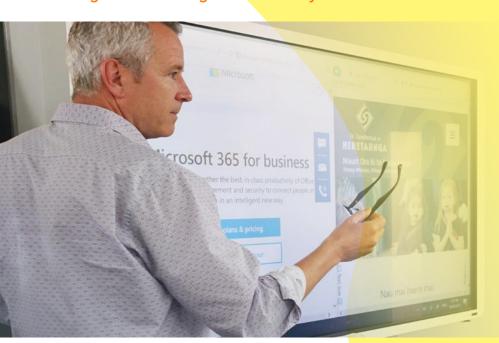
Graham says Teams is also enabling the organisation to come together, think of ideas, capture feedback, do surveys and capture all the information, without being a burden on any one person.

SharePoint and Teams are also helping TToH deliver a new Healthcare Home service, which enables families to get quick triage phone consultations with doctors. It can also be used to organise internal events, including full staff two-day team building events and an ongoing wellness initiative for staff.

TToH is looking to use Microsoft Flow to automate transfer of information from Word, to help managers with reporting - a heavy burden for the organisation which is required to provide monthly, quarterly or annual reports for each of its contracts.

"The efficiencies that can come out from these tools will just be phenomenal. The amount of time staff spend doing reports - that time can be spent with families, thinking about the future, how can we improve more."

"This is where we see ourselves in future." It's providing the organisation with greater flexibility and fewer headaches.

Looking to the future

As to the future, Graham and Waldron can see plenty of opportunities for more improvements, including moving into analytics and BI, building a datawarehouse to help with reporting and analytics, forecasting and providing more complete pictures of clients and TToH. YORB and TToH are also talking about creating virtual doctors using video calls and leveraging technology to take healthcare into the home.

"In order for us to double, IT has to be across everything. It is the only thing that can help us achieve our five year goals.

"We are at a point now where we are growing and we can no longer do the manual processes. We have to start thinking about automation, our data, our forecasting using our time in more efficient and effective ways through IT, with IT and supported by IT – and YORB as our Trusted Advisor."

YORB prides itself on its high level of technical competency, with technicians staying ahead of the game by constantly upgrading their Microsoft skills and taking on new certifications. That's reflected in YORB's Gold partner status with Microsoft.

Waldron says YORB exists to help every one of their clients achieve more and is genuinely excited to be able to help and guide TToH, using technology as an enabler to deliver on their new five-year business strategy.

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