iNova Pharmaceuticals
CASE STUDY

From Frustrating to Fantastic: The Mobility and Cloud Solution Modernising the iNova Pharmaceuticals Workspace

Objective

With a proliferation of applications and a complex end user environment, iNova Pharmaceuticals wanted to build modern and secure workspaces that are consistent and easy to support.

Approach

The decision was made to switch where possible to consistent, cloud-based applications. Due to previous experience, iNova Pharmaceuticals was confident in the appointment of Data#3 to deliver a cloud roadmap, build a solution to better manage user workstations, and build a Microsoft Windows 10 Standard Operating Environment (SOE).

IT Outcome

- A standardised Windows 10 operating environment giving consistency for users.
- Successful introduction of Office 365 throughout the organisation.
- Reduction in tech support calls.
- Reduction in different versions of applications from 400 to just 90.

Business Outcome

- Easier collaboration between users in different locations in Australia and overseas.
- Data stored securely in the cloud, preventing loss of critical information.
- Users have access to modern, secure and well-supported tools that work well.

The Background

iNova Pharmaceuticals sells a range of market-leading, non-prescription medications in countries across Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. They help promote healthy lifestyles through weight management, skincare and lifestyle needs such as sun protection products, and offer popular remedies for coughs, colds and sore throats.

With staff in many locations, each with a different type of computer running diverse operating systems and applications, support had become a challenge and backups were limited. Many users required a greater level of mobility. A decision was made that cloud solutions should be sought where possible to help solve their challenges, and Data#3 was enlisted to help create a cloud roadmap.

The Challenge

For iNova's Pharmaceuticals' sales team, who spend little time in the office, collaboration and access to information was problematic. "Making the situation more difficult, most worked with aging machines which was a state of affairs that couldn't continue," said iNova Pharmaceuticals Associate Director of Technology, Michael Smit. He knew initiating a modernisation project was vital.

"The main driver initially was that we were working with an archaic end user set up," said Smit.

"It was about bringing our end users up to modern standards."

The dated and complex environment meant that data security was an issue. When a sales person's laptop went missing, their ability to work was heavily impacted as data stored on the machine was also lost.

Consistency was a key issue that Smit identified.

"We had multiple versions of software, it was often outdated, with no adequate security," said Smit.

"This was causing everyone's computers to behave erratically, with a long stream of computing problems."

This stream of problems made for a frustrating environment for users, and since they each had admin rights over their own computer, many took matters into their own hands. Applications were loaded by individuals to solve immediate problems, fuelling complexity making planning difficult for the IT support team.

"It was causing our guys to be stuck perpetuity in a break-fix environment," said Smit.

If that weren't complicated enough, iNova Pharmaceuticals South African operations used a separate Active Directory domain, making collaboration with colleagues even more difficult.

"We knew that the right cloud strategy would help us simplify our systems to work better together."

IT Outcome

As iNova Pharmaceuticals and the Data#3 team worked together to get a clearer understanding of the environment, the sheer volume of applications and versions installed became evident. Data#3 consultants conducted a full analysis and produced an accurate catalogue that outlined all applications and their purposes.

"It was difficult to articulate a firm plan upfront – we were working with so many different stakeholders' data migrations, in many parts of the business," said Smit.

"We needed to be dynamic in our planning process, and balance it with effective delivery."

With detailed scheduling, budget and dependencies in place, the team of project management, SOE development and organisational change specialists began the process of transforming the end user experience. First on the agenda for Smit was to update user machines to a consistently high standard.

"We started with tackling the low-hanging fruit, and the first was to get everyone onto a computer less than three years old."

Next, a modern, standardised platform based on Windows 10 was put in place, so that there would be consistency of experience throughout the organisation, and simpler support requirements.

"We are able to use Microsoft software such as Intune and Microsoft Azure Active Directory to remotely manage the environment. From that we had a base," said Smit.

"Then we worked on migrating corporate information to the cloud."

Transition of file shares to SharePoint Online gave iNova Pharmaceuticals sales staff simplified access to their data from anywhere, without the need for VPN connections. Skype for Business Online moved meetings to cloud-hosted dial-in conferencing, for enriched collaboration experience. The consistency of a standardised environment is making support easier for the iNova Pharmaceuticals IT team.

"We are less bombarded by support calls; we had 400 different versions of applications to support, now we are down to 90," said Smit.

"The stability of Windows 10 and Office 365 is an order of magnitude better."

Business Outcome

As users become accustomed to their new tools, the feedback has been positive.

"People love it and they are taking to it well," said Smit.

Smit attributes much of the success to a change management program that included a range of training delivery methods and a 'door always open' approach.

"We did several rounds of training, in person and using a lot of online Microsoft training material. Then we held drop-in clinics for people to ask any question they wanted," said Smit.

"We identified a set of skills that people should be aware of for each product, and we still use this as a basis to establish a level of proficiency."

Now they are no longer faced with navigating the workday with aging machines loaded with an unplanned mix of operating systems and applications, users are able to work more effectively. The change has been good for morale.

"Users are less frustrated. People don't have a toolbox, they have a computer – when it is constantly breaking, it is such a waste of time, so we've achieved an alleviation of frustration," said Smit.

"They've been able to just get on with it."

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The process of streamlining and standardising has given the iNova Pharmaceuticals team clarity about their software licensing obligations, so they can ensure they are correctly covered, with no overspend.

Security and data retention were key considerations for iNova Pharmaceuticals, with the organisation's management team recognising the necessity of protecting corporate information assets. The business is, said Smit, now far better protected.

"Now all our corporate information not stored in other apps is stored in the cloud," said Smit.

"The outcome gives us better security, data retention, and infrastructure management."

Conclusion

The transformation has, for iNova Pharmaceuticals staff, been considerable, in just a short space of time. It was important to complete the project quickly so that the business could reap the benefits.

"If someone had suggested a complete hardware and software refresh and rolling out a productivity suite in 6-12 months, I would've said it couldn't be done," said Smit.

The right partnership is vital in major projects, and Smit said he was hard on Data#3 at times.

"Data#3 showed a real willingness to work with us and make changes where needed," said Smit.

"If I did it all again, I wouldn't hesitate to get the same team."

One of the biggest challenges was, said Smit, closing out the migration to OneDrive.

"We have a lot of field-based users working remotely overseas, and they may have to migrate a Gigabyte of data to the cloud – it can be hard to go that last mile," said Smit.

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Michael Smit, Associate Director of Technology, iNova Pharmaceuticals

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