



Jewelry Company Shines While Transforming Environment with Microsoft Office 365

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Retail

Customer Profile

Culver City, California-based Dogearred creates handcrafted jewelry designed in the spirit of love, kindness, and consciousness. The company is a certified B-Corporation dedicated to using business as a force for good.

Business Situation

Dogearred was in the midst of deploying Google Apps for email when it realized that it needed a more comprehensive, strategic IT direction—a long-term plan that included integrated tools to support business growth.

Solution

The company switched to Microsoft Office 365 to give its 90 employees fully integrated messaging, unified communications, and document storage tools that make them more effective from anywhere on any device.

Benefits

- Enhanced employee productivity
- Improved responsiveness
- Greater cross-company collaboration

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Chad Berryhill, IT Director, Dogearred

Dogearred specializes in designing beautiful and meaningful jewelry. The company wanted to support its growth goals and make it easier for employees to stay connected while representing the company and the social responsibility it stands for, no matter where and how they worked. After starting a deployment of Google Apps, Dogearred switched to Microsoft Office 365 because it offered a better-integrated set of tools and was easier to use. Employees now can communicate seamlessly both internally and with customers, suppliers, and distributors, and they also can be more responsive from outside the office. Now that the company uses Office 365, it has a reliable messaging infrastructure, comprehensive calendaring capabilities, conferencing, document storage, and other unified capabilities that are helping it transition into a more connected, nimble business.

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Inspiration Through Jewelry

Meaningful messages can celebrate individuality, self-expression, love, and friendship. That’s the idea behind Dogeared, a jewelry company that creates simple, modern and versatile jewelry paired with inspiring messages. Like its products, Dogeared lives by the philosophy that what goes around comes around; as such, the company is a certified B-Corporation dedicated to handcrafting everything locally, respecting the planet, and partnering with non-profits that share their vision of a better world. The company continually meets rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. “We make products we are proud of, we work with people we admire, and everything is about team,” says Marcia Maizel-Clarke, Founder and Owner at Dogeared.

The California company had some adjusting to do as it began to achieve greater, more widespread success. “I learned the inevitable lesson that most artists-turned-business-owners face sooner or later: how to strike a balance between creativity and fulfilling the more practical needs of running a business,” says Maizel-Clarke.

Those practical needs included establishing an environment in which employees could work more closely with each other and with the company’s suppliers, distributors, and customers to promote and keep pace with the company’s growth. To create that atmosphere, Dogeared hired an IT director with the enterprise experience to develop a technology vision for the company that would alleviate its growing pains. “Retail is a dynamic industry that moves quickly, so it’s tough to slow down enough to make long-term plans,” says Chad Berryhill, IT Director at Dogeared. “But the time had come for us to become more sophisticated

in communication and collaboration capabilities if we wanted to support and further our growth.”

Dogeared needed a plan that could address issues faced by multiple groups within its workforce. For example, its sales representatives needed a more reliable way to communicate with retail customers than the company’s existing email systems, which were prone to outages. Sales staff also wanted better access to Dogeared’s internal network to find answers to questions more quickly, even as they traveled to trade shows and made sales calls. Other employees sought to work together more easily. “We had no unified calendaring capabilities, we had to wait for our service provider to create distribution lists, and we relied on a range of expensive, disparate products for document sharing and conferencing,” says Berryhill. “Our teams needed an easier way to schedule meetings and conference rooms, to collaborate on marketing materials without worrying about version issues, and to access company assets.”

Because Dogeared had built its IT environment on an as-needed basis, it was difficult to expand the business. “Until recently, the company made one-off decisions, purchasing software box by box, rather than as a business,” says Berryhill. “When I joined Dogeared in 2014, it was clear that we needed to stop and evaluate what technology tools were necessary to truly operate as a coordinated business at scale.”

Back in 2013, the company had purchased Google Apps under the assumption that it was taking the first step toward a more unified technology environment, but Berryhill quickly discovered that the product did not provide a long-term answer. “I had a clear vision of what our

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future IT environment looked like, and Google Apps just wasn't part of it,” says Berryhill. “Not only did we want to be able to integrate our communications tools with our Microsoft Dynamics NAV enterprise resources planning system, but we also wanted to give employees a streamlined experience, whether they were scheduling meetings, conducting videoconferences, or creating documents, and Google Apps couldn't help us accomplish those goals.”

Pearls of Wisdom

Berryhill recognized that Microsoft Office 365—a suite of productivity, communications, and collaboration cloud services—would provide Dogeared with the necessary functionality and long-term road map. “We needed a strong foundation,” says Berryhill. “I saw that Office 365 was a more robust tool than Google Apps, and I knew that all our employees would be more comfortable working with its integrated components.”

Dogeared worked with CorpInfo, a Microsoft Cloud Accelerate Partner based in Los Angeles, California, to deploy Office 365. “I walked away from our initial meeting feeling like I'd found a partner who would help me get Dogeared where it needs to be, and the CorpInfo team's hard work and insight have supported that feeling ever since. We signed the initial paperwork with Microsoft in April 2014, and by the end of May 2014, we were up and running with Office 365.”

As Good as Gold

Today, Dogeared employees take advantage of Microsoft Exchange Online for comprehensive messaging and calendaring, OneDrive for Business for document storage, and Microsoft Lync Online for presence, instant messaging, and conferencing capabilities. “The quickest win after we went live with Office 365 was

Microsoft Lync; employees adopted it immediately, and it helps them stay connected and facilitate valuable communication where physical distances and technology challenges made it difficult in the past.”

Employees also use Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus so that they have the latest version of Office on every device. “Most of our employees use Macs, so they appreciate that having Office ProPlus for Mac makes it possible to avoid compatibility issues and also have the same precision tools on every device,” says Berryhill. It was frustrating and time-consuming for Dogeared employees when the data or appearance in their files did not stay the same from one device to the next. They now not only have file fidelity but also a consistent Microsoft Office experience no matter what device they or their colleagues choose to use.

“We believe that the move to Office 365 offers the answer for companies with limited IT resources that still need innovative, enterprise-class tools,” says Berryhill. “Our IT department relies heavily on its outsourced services, and it would have been challenging to provide the types of solutions we have through Office 365 so quickly and in such a cost-effective manner. I'm confident that Microsoft will continue to make valuable new capabilities available for me to quickly deliver to our workforce. For example, with the announcement of Office for iPad, our teams are now using more travel-friendly devices for business purposes despite being on a bring-your-own-device model.”

Enhanced Employee Productivity

Within the first week, Dogeared employees felt more connected and efficient. For example, employees can rely on Microsoft Exchange Online for scheduling and have confidence that all calendars are in

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agreement. “We know that people are getting more done because they’re no longer roaming the halls, asking one another if there’s supposed to be a meeting at that time,” adds Berryhill. “It sounds so basic, but we lacked the ability to trust what we saw on our calendars. Today, using Exchange Online, even our iPads and mobile phones show us accurate, up-to-date email and calendar information.”

The company’s salesforce also now has access to the information they need from on the road, which is helpful when they are making sales calls. “By switching to Office 365, we’ve removed the headaches related to our old point solutions and enabled our talented, creative workforce to be more efficient,” says Berryhill. “With so many ways to reach out and work with each other from anywhere, we can be more dynamic as a company.”

Improved Responsiveness and Greater Corporate Unity

Dogeared employees appreciate the ability to stay in closer touch both with colleagues and with suppliers, distributors, and customers. The company uses Microsoft Lync Online to see when colleagues are online and available to answer questions. “The owners of Dogeared often work from home, and by using Lync Online, they stay more connected to the company and vice versa,” says Berryhill. “Because the company’s owners indicate their presence online, employees reach out to them more confidently, knowing that they are truly willing to answer questions, even when they’re not in the office.”

The company also sees opportunities to use Lync Online to give suppliers, distributors, and even customers a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes at Dogeared to help them feel a closer tie

with the company. “I can envision conducting our seasonal product launches as a Lync Online videoconference or webinar,” says Berryhill. “Watching live demonstrations or videos of employees meticulously hand-stringing beads and hammering silver will convey our passion and commitment to our products far more powerfully than reading a product insert,” says Berryhill.

The company believes that Lync Online and the Yammer social networking solution, which comes with Office 365 licenses, will bring employees closer together. “We have a talented workforce, and any time we can tap into the knowledge base that we already have here, we can grow as a company. We see Yammer as a valuable opportunity to break down walls and improve cross-company communication,” says Berryhill. “And we’re already coming up with interesting ways to stay connected using Lync Online. For example, one of our employees used the Microsoft Lync app on her mobile phone to check in with her team while she waited for jury duty at the courthouse.”

Cost Savings

Of course, as Dogeared evolves into a larger company, it must consider the financial ramifications of its purchasing decisions. Adopting Office 365 has been a cost-saver for Dogeared, and it believes that the value from its investment will only grow as it uses more of the solution’s functionality. As a start, employees are moving away from third-party document storage to OneDrive for Business, using it as their single accessible source for product photography, company policies, and marketing campaign documents. “We no longer have to email bulky files back and forth for approval or pay for third-party cloud storage because we have OneDrive for Business,” says Berryhill.

For More Information

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"It's hard to estimate our actual return on investment because we aren't done eliminating third-party products, but we know that we are saving money with Office 365," says Berryhill. "We've seen so much reward from the move to Office 365 in just one week that it's exciting to imagine the value we'll receive when we expand our use of Lync Online, start to use Microsoft SharePoint Online to automate workflow, and take fuller advantage of everything that Office 365 has to offer."

Technical Summary

Dogeared uses a range of Microsoft Office 365 components to help unify the company. Employees take advantage of Exchange Online for comprehensive messaging and calendaring, and they use OneDrive for Business as a centralized source for online document storage. They tap into the greater Dogeared knowledge base through Lync Online for presence, instant messaging, and conferencing capabilities. In the future, Dogeared salespeople will place orders through Office 365 when they're at trade shows because the company plans to integrate it with a customer relationship management system to create a mobile sales system.

Microsoft Office 365

The new Office provides anywhere access to your familiar Office applications—plus email, calendar, video conferencing, and your most current documents—on almost any device, from PCs to smartphones to tablets.

For more information about Microsoft Office 365, go to:
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Software and Services

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