

# Property Council of Australia Implementing an IT Revolution

An IT Infrastructure Refresh Case Study



## Case Study

Property Council  
of Australia

## Website

propertycouncil.com.au

## Industry

Not-for-profit

## Company Size

51-200

## Country

Australia

## About

### Property Council of Australia

The Property Council of Australia is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry and biggest employer – property.

They champion the interests of more than 2,200 member companies that represent the full spectrum of the industry, including those who invest, own, manage and develop in all sectors of property, creating landmark projects and environments where people live, work, shop and play.

## The

### Summary

The Property Council needed enterprise-grade infrastructure, but did not want to become experts in managing this themselves. They needed to keep control of their core apps on-premises while increasing mobility by moving other workloads to the cloud. They partnered with Brennan to help them through this journey.

#### Business Challenge



- Ageing technology infrastructure
- Lack of collaboration and flexibility

#### The Solution



- Infrastructure refresh including applications and end-user devices
- Backup and disaster recovery services
- Company-wide training
- Managed IT Services

#### The Results



- The Property Council of Australia are now able to operate with ease, collaborating across multiple interstate sites with modern infrastructure supporting it all

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“Everything we did was about implementing collaboration, mobility and flexibility for our workforce. We wanted to give them the tools to work efficiently, any place, any time.

Our IT revolution was about more than just replacing some infrastructure, it was a change to our organisation’s culture”

## Helen Harms

Head of Technology  
& Digital Innovation  
Property Council  
of Australia

## The Challenge

The Property Council’s IT team had made a conscious decision to focus on building its website in 2016 to a standard that truly represented its members. In making this decision, it was acknowledged that some infrastructure needs would be set aside until the website project was completed.

As a result, aging technology was impacting applications, and restricting the way that the Council’s staff worked. Users worked on ‘clunky’ laptops and desktops. The collaboration was limited, and mobile working almost impossible. The IT team was not seen in a positive light within the organisation.

“People in our interstate offices would dial into meetings by phone, and it was hard for them to feel like they were a part of the group,” said Helen Harms, Head of Technology and Digital Innovation at The Property Council.

“If you went to a meeting, you had to print an agenda, take notes, then type them up afterwards.”

Working from home was fraught with dropouts and bandwidth issues. It was, says Harms, a “pretty ordinary” experience.

“If you wanted to work, you came into the office.”

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## The Solution

A refresh of infrastructure, applications and end-user devices was needed to update the Council’s workplace. Harms and her team embarked on what she calls a ‘technology revolution’. While it was a major project, the IT team was clear on its priorities.

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 THE SOLUTION CONT...

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“The individuals you work with can make or break a project, and Brennan has a knack of picking the right people,” said Harms. “They are a highly technical team, but very modest, very humble, without the arrogance you sometimes see.”

Such a major contract meant considerable planning, and Harms’ team met with Brennan daily for a month to cover every detail. Doing this before contracts were even signed spoke of the trust between the two businesses, said Harms, citing the ‘commitment to excellence’ they shared.

These plans were a vital part of the process.

“Any project has issues, but if you get the design right, the problems you find during testing will be fixable,” said Harms.

That design included upgraded disaster recovery and backup services in the Brennan cloud, an environment based on high performance, and enterprise-level HPE technology. The WAN was upgraded, as were the Windows environments. All end-user devices were upgraded, and Harms said that giving users a choice of devices helped engage them in the process.

“We tried to choose between buying a hundred Surface Pro tablets, or a hundred laptops. In the end, we said everyone can choose,” said Harms.

An upgrade to Office 365 supported the shift to flexible working, with users receiving training to help them get to grips with the new tools available.

Organisational culture was also something Harms prioritised, and a change manager was involved early in the project to its conclusion. The change manager worked with champions throughout the organisation to collect data and consider plans. This helped to ensure the change was a positive experience for the Council’s staff.



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82\* staff satisfaction with the new work environment



Negative sentiment towards IT department completely removed



Ease of collaboration across multiple sites

## The Results

The project represented a seismic shift for the Council, Harms said, that the workforce was quick to adopt.

“Our IT revolution was about more than just replacing some infrastructure, it was a change to our organisation’s culture,” says Harms. “We can walk around as we work, we have areas with little couches and coffee tables where we can have informal meetings but stay connected.”

True to her focus on the end-users, Harms conducted a survey and noted that 82% were very or extremely satisfied with the new work environment. Her team was proactive in addressing queries and providing training where needed to ensure any teething problems were overcome. Every individual in the business received at least three hours of training on the new workplace.

By team, Harms said she means the entire Property Council and Brennan group working on the project.

“Many people actually thought the Brennan guys were from The Property Council because they were always here,” said Harms. “And when they were asked something outside their project’s scope, they always just helped anyway.”

The devices and training were rolled out just in time for the Council’s Christmas lunches around the country, which were attended by 1,500 people in Brisbane alone. It was a high risk that paid off for Harms’ dedicated team.

“Someone could take their Surface Pro, show members things on systems – having those tools and knowing they would work was great.”

The negative sentiment about their IT department has ‘completely gone’ according to Harms, and they are a powerful force for helping provide exceptional representation to members. But it is the informal observations that Harms is most excited about.

“The language people use around the office, like just saying ‘send me a Skype invite,’ or that they are just going to work from home,’ said Harms. “It became the new norm in an unspoken way.”

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Want more information about the products and services that Brennan have helped Property Council of Australia with? Here's a brief overview.

Visit [brennanit.com.au](http://brennanit.com.au) for more information.

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### Managed IT Services

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