



Company

Medium Sized Non-profit

McClellan, California

Industry

Consulting

Office 365 Tenant to Tenant Migration for a Non-Profit Organization

Background:

A mid-sized non-profit organization in California had purchased an Office 365 subscription from their web hosting service provider. The organization works closely with community leaders, governmental agencies, and corporations to educate residents in wildfire-prone areas and develops solutions to prevent and mitigate such calamities. The organization had grown rapidly and had started working with a thriving statewide network of local, agency, and corporate partners, with whom they were collaborating using an Office 365 subscription provided by their web hosting service. The web hosting provider is authorized by Microsoft to customize regular Office 365 plans to suit small and medium business to reduce costs by restricting the utility of the platform. Consequently, the organization approached Apps4Rent seeking assistance for an Office 365 tenant to tenant migration.

Apps4Rent's Solution:

Apps4Rent Office 365 migration consultants worked with the organization to identify its requirements. It was learned that with the current Office 365 tenant, the organization did not have the flexibility to add additional Microsoft products that are offered as a part of the Office 365 suite, such as Microsoft Project Online.

The solution was to perform a tenant to tenant migration, with which the organization could use a direct Office 365 plan by Microsoft that allowed them to use the applications and services that they need. Apps4Rent identified that Microsoft 365 Business Standard for non-profits was the best plan for the organization. As one of a select group of Tier 1 CSPs who can offer Office 365 Non-Profit plans, Apps4Rent was able to save up to 75% of the subscription cost for the organization as compared the corresponding commercial plan.

Outcome

One of the primary requirements of the organization was that they could not afford any data loss or downtime because of the nature of their operations. Apps4Rent engineers were able to perform the tenant to tenant migration from the web hosting service provider to a Microsoft 365 Business Standard direct tenant within a few hours. This involved the migration of emails to the new tenant as well as setting up other services. After the project, the users confirmed that there was no loss of data and that they could use all the features in their Office 365 plan. Moreover, the organization now had full access to its tenant and a separate billing portal from which they can manage their licenses.

Background:

A California-based non-profit corporation that works with local community groups, such as local government bodies, fire departments, homeowners associations, and other entities involved in wildfire prevention was using Office 365 email solutions provided by the same vendor that was hosting their website.

The customized Office 365 plan offered by the vendor had crippled some of the capabilities of the productivity suite, which the non-profit organization, in hindsight, realized were useful for their operations as they expanded. With the syndicated tenant, users were not able to use several standard administration features such as creating AppCatalog for SharePoint webparts. Additionally, they had much less control over their tenancy as the solution was bundled with their website hosting services.

Consequently, they decided to separate their Office 365 subscription from their web hosting service provider to take advantage of other Microsoft products. They approached Apps4Rent for migration assistance as their current ISP did not allow CSP transfer which made the process more difficult especially when there are only a few vendors who have experience in such migrations.

Why Office 365 Tenant to Tenant Migration?

Like many businesses that use syndicated Office 365 tenants provided by their web hosting services, because of the perceived discounts that they offer with web hosting, the non-profit too had opted for one of their bundled plans. Much to their surprise, many of the admin features were missing, which prevented them from modifying the Office 365 tenant provided by the vendor.

As it turned out, the web hosting provider was authorized by Microsoft to modify the business-class email and productivity service to suit the requirements of small and medium businesses such as the aforementioned NGO. Some of these changes include a modified user interface for the Office 365 portal, changes in the authentication system, and a customized Admin center with limited functionalities, among others.

While these changes do simplify the product considerably and make the plans more affordable, it comes at the steep cost of loss of control and compromised capabilities that hampered the operations of the NGO

Performing an Office 365 syndicated tenant migration to Microsoft Office 365 direct tenant involves the process of dropping the domain ownership with the web hosting and transferring it to Microsoft. This would bypass the customizations implemented by the vendor and provide the subscriber full control over their tenant.

Challenges of Implementation

Performing a tenant to tenant migration from a syndicated Office 365 plan to a direct plan is far more challenging than a regular Office 365 migration. One of the greatest challenges for such migrations is that there is no official Microsoft tool to migrate Office 365 across tenants. The problem is particularly amplified by the lack of admin access to the tenant hosted by the vendor. The vendor has to approve the transfer of the domain to Microsoft and delete the old tenant.

Additionally, the customizations at the vendor's end added to the complexity of the migration. Many of the tasks that can generally be automated have to be performed manually.

Besides, time was a major constraint for the organization. With several unknown variables that were outside Apps4Rent's sphere of control, there was always a fear of missing service level agreements (SLA) in moving from the source to the destination tenant.

Apps4Rent Succeeds in Tenant to Tenant Migration

The complexity of the migration necessitated the involvement of migration experts who are familiar with both Windows/ Linux Server, as well as CRM apps. The customer approached a migration services provider before approaching Apps4Rent. While the provider did work with the customer for the setup, they were unable to drive it to completion.

Apps4Rent engineers were roped in to insert the master's and import the data from QuickBooks Desktop. The implementation was done in two phases. The first phase involved standard data migration, such as General Ledger, Customers, Vendors, and Items data into Dynamics 365 Business Central from QuickBooks, and vanilla implementation with standard features. At this stage, proactive engagement from the customer was still required as they needed to modify their chart of accounts (COA) to match Dynamics 365 Business Central standards. Additionally, they had to share their Postings groups before Apps4Rent could insert customer, vendor, item, bank, and other data.

Once all the details were available, Apps4Rent staged the data on the sandbox environment for the customer to review and verify that all the data from QuickBooks Desktop had been migrated to Dynamics 365 Business Central. The cut-off date was agreed upon as per the convenience of the customer, and the migration was scheduled to be completed in a couple of weeks. At this stage, Apps4Rent engineers experienced issues in creating production BOM (bill of material) in the sandbox environment for Dynamics 365 Business Central, which was quickly resolved by coordinating with Microsoft.

As one of a handful of Tier 1 Microsoft CSPs who can provide and provision all Microsoft 365 Online products including special plans for Government, Education, and Non-Profits, our Microsoft-certified consultants coupled their deep expertise with appropriate tools to perform such a risky migration that many other service providers had turned down.

Clear communication and co-operation by all stakeholders, played a vital role in driving the project to completion.

Business Outcome of Apps4Rent Managed Tenant to Tenant Migration

The non-profit corporation had chosen Apps4Rent to perform the tenant-to-tenant migration for two primary reasons, free migration on annual billing of licenses, and proven expertise. As a Microsoft Direct Tier 1 Partner, Apps4Rent could provision all Office 365 plans, including Microsoft 365 Business Standard for Non-Profits, that is available at up to a 76% lower rate than the corresponding commercial plan.

The migration to a direct tenant ensured that the organization has access to the full-featured productivity suite at the best possible rate. Additionally, its members and volunteers rest assured that receive 24/7 phone, chat, and email support from Apps4Rent, something that not even Microsoft promises.