Grassroots IT

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES COUNCIL GOLD COAST :

A CASE STUDY OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

CASE STUDY DETAILS

Client
Multicultural Communities
Council Gold Coast

Industry
Non-profit Organisation

Solution
Managed IT Support,
Data & Automation,
Intune, Entra ID,
Sophos

MCCGC
MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES
COUNCIL GOLD COAST LTD

ABOUT MCCGC

Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast (MCCGC) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to providing support services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the Gold Coast area for over 40 years. Beneath MCCGC's organisational umbrella, they oversee two distinctive community-focused brands: MCCGC's Community Programs team and CURA Aged Care Services.

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The **MCCGC**'s Community Programs team aid individuals in their settlement journey, bolsters their overall wellbeing, tackles mental health challenges, facilitates employment prospects, navigates the intricacies of the NDIS, offers cultural training, empowers them through capacity building, champions their rights, and fosters community connections. CÜRA Aged Care Services is wholeheartedly committed to enhancing the lives of seniors in Southeast Queensland and Northern New South Wales. CÜRA empowers them to age gracefully, maintain their independence in the comfort of their own homes and link with their community.

The MCCGC team of 190 staff, fluent in over 45 languages, has assisted clients from more than 43 countries, reflecting MCCGC's commitment to diversity and cultural understanding.

THE CHALLENGE

Stuart McFarlane joined MCCGC as CIO in 2022, finding an organisation without a digital strategy or IT leadership. The incumbent IT provider offered basic operational support and lacked the expertise to guide strategic improvements. IT systems were inefficient and vulnerable, with inadequate identity management, poor cybersecurity practices, and insufficient backup and redundancy.

Staff struggled with outdated equipment and software, hindering their ability to serve clients effectively. McFarlane's challenge was to transform MCCGC's IT into a strategic enabler. Before launching a transformation program, he assessed the organisation's technology capabilities, staff skills, and digital maturity.

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A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

McFarlane's critical insight was the need for a trustworthy IT partnership, not a service provider. Grassroots IT was selected for its proven expertise working with mid-market non-profit organisations, and its proven track record of offering strategic guidance for long-term improvement rather than just reactively solving daily fires.

Together Grassroots IT and MCCGC formulated a plan to rationalise systems, apply appropriate technologies, and address urgent vulnerabilities. The partnership approach brought strategic dialogue, versatile expertise, and access to specialised resources needed for a successful transformation.

Following a thorough assessment of the existing IT infrastructure, Grassroots IT and MCCGC prioritised improvements based on strategic goals and potential impact, working to implement several key initiatives such as:

▶ Identity and access management

▶ Remediating cybersecurity gaps

▶ Platform & infrastructure upgrades

▶ Enhancing end-user support

Importantly, the partnership focused on appropriate, right-sized solutions rather than over-engineering with expensive enterprise-class tools and unnecessary complexity. Optimisation for a mid-market organisation brought big results without unnecessary capabilities and costs.

"We can achieve great things for our business when we let our digital partner join the conversation. Grassroots IT has a contributing and guiding seat at our table." – Stuart McFarlane

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IDENTITY & ACCESS MANAGEMENT FOUNDATIONS

MCCGC had already embarked on migrating some of its services to the cloud, but the existing on-premises infrastructure was proving troublesome due to not being integrated with Azure Active Directory. This situation meant users were forced to manage separate identities and credentials for cloud and on-prem systems, causing unnecessary complexity for end users and IT support staff.

To help consolidate user identities, Grassroots IT worked closely with MCCGC to properly integrate their legacy on-premises Active Directory environment with Azure AD utilising Azure AD Connect synchronisation. This integration allowed user accounts and password credentials to be synced between the cloud and on-prem systems. Users were transitioned to unified cloud identities with matching UPNs, eliminating the frustrations of duplicate accounts and credentials across cloud and on-prem and providing enhanced security and improved user experience.

This unification of cloud and on-prem Active Directories set the foundation for future initiatives that will fully deploy Microsoft Entra ID and permanently retire all legacy Active Directories.

CLOSING CYBERSECURITY GAPS

The assessment uncovered several security gaps in the existing MCCGC environment, including unchecked backup access, inadequate firewalls, poorly protected VPN, and lack of endpoint encryption. Grassroots IT worked closely with MCCGC to close these gaps, implementing a series of security solutions to protect the organisation better.

Solutions implemented included:

► Deployed Sophos firewalls for enhanced network protection

► Replaced Windows VPN with Sophos VPN, including mandated MFA

► Enabled BitLocker encryption via Intune for data at rest security

► Ongoing cybersecurity awareness training for all staff

Executing these strategic security initiatives allowed Grassroots IT to systematically remediate vulnerabilities through integrated solutions protecting the expanded attack surface and providing a proven, right-sized foundation for ongoing cybersecurity improvements. Further ongoing initiatives will expand Microsoft Intune and Azure AD capabilities for strengthened identity, access, and data protection.

"Our partnership enables us to respond to cyber threats without being hindered by contractual issues. We have prioritised protection over anything else." – Stuart McFarlane

PLATFORM & INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES

MCCGC's aging on-premises infrastructure posed significant risks including unstable systems and constrained performance. Outdated core switches and Wi-Fi infrastructure led to poor connectivity and limited adoption of mobile devices and data-dependant cloud services. Endpoints were running outdated operating systems that were unsupported and posed security and compatibility issues.

To address these infrastructure risks, MCCGC executed several key upgrades:

▶ Core network components were replaced to provide higher performance and reliability.

▶ Outdated endpoints were refreshed to obtain supported and secure machines.

▶ Microsoft Intune implemented mobile device management to enable productivity and improve security.

These crucial infrastructure improvements helped stabilize unreliable systems, enhanced security protections and boosted end-user productivity. Ongoing initiatives will fully retire remaining on-premises servers by migrating file services and applications into the Microsoft cloud including SharePoint Online and Azure.

ENHANCING THE END-USER EXPERIENCE

A key objective in the IT transformation was improving the experience for MCCGC staff, who rely on technology every day to serve clients. When Grassroots IT took over support, the end user experience was frustrating for staff, with inefficient, outdated tools hindering productivity.

Problems frequently encountered included unreliable network connectivity, lack of remote access, forgotten passwords for multiple systems, and severe delays in resolving support tickets. These issues resulted in staff workaround and waste, taking time away from assisting clients.

MCCGC has empowered staff with improved technology by modernising core infrastructure and platforms. Upgrading network components enhanced connectivity, while cloud identity integration simplified access through single sign-on. Migrating file services and applications to the cloud made content securely available anywhere.

Ongoing initiatives will further optimise user productivity by consolidating remaining legacy platforms into cloud services and adopting cloud productivity tools like Microsoft 365 to centralise document collaboration and communication.

Just as importantly, Grassroots IT has focused on improving support experiences by resolving issues rapidly. Quick responses to tickets and outages have rebuilt trust and confidence in IT support. Resolution times have improved from months to hours thanks to effective monitoring tools and support processes.

Through this user-focused approach, Grassroots IT has transformed technology from a hindrance into an enabler for MCCGC's mission. Staff are now equipped with the tools, access, and support needed to focus fully on client outcomes.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Over 15 months leading the digital transformation, Stuart McFarlane and Grassroots IT has overseen tremendous improvements, including:

- ▶ Systems stabilised after years of instability from aging infrastructure plagued with performance and reliability issues.

- ▶ Overall security posture is enhanced through solutions systematically addressing gaps such as poor firewalls, unmanaged devices, and lack of multi-factor authentication.

- ▶ Employee efficiency improved with modern, responsive devices and applications replacing clunky, outdated technology.

- ▶ Ongoing strategic guidance provided through strong partnerships facilitating long-term success.

- ▶ 75% reduction in support tickets as network and hardware problems were proactively resolved.
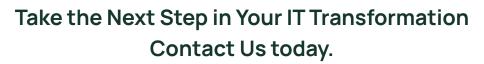
From a technology perspective, Grassroots IT helped MCCGC establish foundational cyber protections and resiliency, allowing the expansion of cloud services. By collaborating closely, they transformed IT from an Achilles heel into a strategic asset supporting broader digital maturity. Staff are empowered with technology tools to enable their mission rather than hindered by unreliable infrastructure.

The successful strategic partnership between Grassroots IT and MCCGC serves as a model for how smart organisations turn around problematic technology environments by investing in both infrastructure and expertise. With the guidance of a trusted advisor and the organisation's leadership, IT can be elevated to support business goals effectively.

Stuart concludes: "*You can't do that if you don't have the right partner. By cooperating with each other, MCCGC has managed to transform IT.*

With Grassroots IT by our side, we feel assured that our Cloud First approach will pave the way for our organisation's expansion and digital sophistication." – Stuart McFarlane

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Contact Us today.

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