Tenant migration enhances business agility.

FirstGroup efficiently moves its US and UK divisions into their own Microsoft 365 tenants with help from Quest migration solutions.

Quest

FirstGroup

Country: **United States and United Kingdom**

Employees: **10,000+**

Industry: **Transportation**

Website: **https://www.firstgroupplc.com/**

Business agility is one of the keys to success in the modern global economy. IT teams need to be prepared to quickly and accurately migrate from one platform to another, consolidate IT ecosystems as part of merger and acquisition (M&A) activity, or spin off parts of an IT environment to support a divestiture or other business requirements. FirstGroup ensures it is always ready for the next business opportunity by relying on migration solutions and expert support from Quest.

FirstGroup is a leading provider of transport services in the United Kingdom and North America. The company comprises five large divisions that offer student transportation, transit management and contracting services, scheduled intercity coaches, busing, and rail travel. Its combined fleets comprise some 60,000 vehicles and serve over 2 billion passengers a year.

About this case study

To enable better business agility, FirstGroup needed separate its US and UK divisions into their own IT environments.

Solution

With migration solutions from Quest, FirstGroup has been able to smoothly move users, along with their OneDrive data and email, from the source Microsoft 365 tenant into the appropriate target tenants. With sound migration planning and flexible tools, the two-person migration team was able to overcome both technical restrictions from Microsoft and the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and put the company well on its way to its desired IT architecture.

Benefits

- Delivered a seamless migration for business users
- Enabled a two-person team to handle migration planning and execution
- Smoothly migrated users, OneDrive data and email
- Enabled effective control of the migration without the need to step foot in the office

Solutions at a glance

- Microsoft Platform Management

Ensuring business agility through IT migrations

Transportation is a highly dynamic industry, as FirstGroup can attest. Among other things, the company recently took over the operation of a large rail service that links London with cities and towns across England, North Wales and Scotland, and also sold three major bus facilities in North America. To ensure the company is well prepared for future M&A activity and other opportunities, the IT team needed to migrate the various divisions into their own IT environments. However, the divisions still needed to be able to communicate and work together easily.

Specifically, the IT team needed to break up the company's current hybrid environment, comprising one on-premises Active Directory domain and a single Azure AD tenant, into two hybrid environments, one for each of two divisions. At the same time, all users still needed to be able to communicate and collaborate effectively. The strategy was to tackle the tenant-to-tenant migrations first, which involved moving some 4,500 users and their OneDrive and email content.

Migrations demand best-in-breed solutions

Both Dave Lynch, CIO at FirstGroup, and John Windsor, infrastructure architect, were keenly aware of the importance of getting the migration done right and on time. "In a large project that involves thousands of users and a great deal of critical data, any delays or migration issues are likely to cause quite a significant impact on the business," explains Windsor. "Some of the divisional employees being migrated are business critical, including some that are responsible for the safety of rail travel. It was essential not to disrupt their work."

The migration was also an opportunity for the IT team to add value to the business. "As you can

PRODUCTS & SERVICES
Software
• On Demand Migration
• Migration Manager for Active Directory

imagine, divisions turning over a several billion pounds do not want to be impacted by IT," notes Lynch. "They've already been impacted massively by COVID, so there was no way I wanted them getting pounded by a poor IT migration. We needed to deliver a very large divestment, splitting in two different directions all at the same time, all on a strict timescale. So we needed migration tools that could deliver with military precision."

> "If another company asked for my advice about IT migrations, I would say, 'Don't think that you can do it on your own.' Quest has done thousands of migrations and I haven't, and everybody I've met from Quest has been very keen to make my project a success.
>
> *Dave Lynch, CIO, FirstGroup*

Quest is the migration expert

Lynch and Windsor were also in complete agreement about what tools to choose: On Demand Migration and Migration Manager for Active Directory from Quest. "Back when I came to FirstGroup, we used Quest solutions to migrate from Lotus Notes to Exchange, and the project was very successful, so Quest was our go-to vendor," recalls Lynch. "Plus, we had a number of people on the team who had used the products and recommended them. Nevertheless, we did a thorough review of the marketplace, and found that Quest still produced the ultimate products. We were very glad to have them, since Microsoft doesn't provide tools for tenant migrations."

"I wanted the best tools for this job because these divisions are relying on us getting this right the first time," adds Windsor. "We picked the Quest tools because they're best of breed, so we knew they would enable us to achieve our goal of 100% migration success."

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On Demand Migration is an easy-to-use SaaS solution that enables you to simply and securely migrate Microsoft 365 tenants running workloads such as Exchange, OneDrive, SharePoint and Teams. An intuitive dashboard gives you complete visibility into your migration project so you can track progress in real time, all while ensuring users can continue to communicate and collaborate seamlessly throughout the project.

Migration Manager for Active Directory empowers you to migrate your on-premises Active Directory with no downtime, no data loss and no stress. You can easily plan and execute any migration scenario, from simple AD improvements to complete domain restructuring, and ensure that users maintain secure access to workstations, resources and email.

> **On Demand Migration is very intuitive and very simple to use, even if you don't have much migration experience. Even though I had to dart in and out of the kickoff meetings, I was able to easily pick up how the console works, how to do the initial discovery and how to execute the migrations.**
>
> *John Windsor, Infrastructure Architect, FirstGroup*

Off and running in no time

From the very start of the migration, the IT team at FirstGroup was impressed with how easy the Quest SaaS solution was to learn and use. "On Demand Migration is very intuitive and very simple to use, even if you don't have much migration experience," Windsor reports. "Even though I had to dart in and out of the kickoff meetings, I was able to easily pick up how the console works, how to do the initial

discovery and how to execute the migrations. In fact, I don't even think you need to be anywhere near my technical level or my team's technical level to perform a migration using On Demand Migration."

FirstGroup is very satisfied with how well the migration project has been moving ahead. "The discovery process went really quickly for us," notes Windsor. "My colleague and I designed a very detailed migration strategy and created a step-by-step guide to ensure someone else could pick up the work if we were unavailable. The initial migrations have been fairly seamless; we've got a schedule of users that we're migrating on a nightly basis. Soon, we'll have the kick-off meeting for using Migration Manager for Active Directory to migrate our on-premises Active Directory environment."

Overcoming technical challenges and the challenges of a pandemic

Indeed, the FirstGroup migration is proceeding better than might be expected, given that the project is more complicated than many migrations. "When we built our migration strategy, we had to accept certain Microsoft restrictions, like not being able to have the same object replicated into Azure Active Directory more than once and not being able to leave the mailboxes in the source tenant active," Windsor explains. "So, once we migrate a user and all their data, we have to cut them over and remove them from the old tenant. They run a process on the client device, and their migration is complete."

On top of the technical challenges were the realities of a global pandemic. "It's certainly no small job to migrate two large divisions normally, and in a pandemic, it's a bloody nightmare," says Lynch. "We're having to do everything remotely, which makes many things even harder. For example, we've had to put a lot of thought and effort into building effective communications plans for our users. It's no good putting posters up in the office because there's nobody there to read them, so we've had to use Zoom and Teams to get info out to people. We've also implemented a 24/7 phone system, a helpdesk, pre-migration interviews with people, and

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post-migration clinics to fix niggles and issues. Having a SaaS solution like On Demand Migration was brilliant, since our IT team hasn't needed to set foot in the office once."

Meeting compliance requirements

On Demand Migration also helps the IT team provide evidence that all sensitive data in the migration that is subject to various regulations is being handled properly. "Our tenant in the US hosts sensitive customer data that needs to be handled in the appropriate fashion," says Windsor. "With On Demand Migration, we have an audit trail proving exactly how we moved that data. For example, we could show auditors how we moved data from our US-based tenant in a US-based storage area across the Atlantic and into a UK-based tenant, and prove that the data was deleted permanently from Microsoft's environment in the US."

Thanks to Quest, Windsor can perform all those migrations with confidence. "The beauty of the tool is that migrates all of the data for all of our users," he says. "So, that's one less thing that I have to worry about — I don't ever worry about the On Demand Migration tool failing."

Ensuring easy collaboration between tenants

Even though FirstGroup is separating its business divisions into separate Microsoft 365 tenants, the company needed to ensure that all employees could still communicate and collaborate effectively. Accordingly, the IT team began looking for a tool that would synchronize the global address lists (GALs) across the different divisions. They quickly discovered Binary Tree Power365® Directory Sync by Quest, which can set up and maintain an Active Directory sync, an Azure AD sync, or even a sync between Active Directory and Azure AD so that users can find each other in a unified GAL.

"We compared the Binary Tree solution with several other products," recalls Windsor. "It was completely based in the cloud, which was a big tick for us. Not having to provision on-prem services was absolutely ideal. That tool is now in place, providing global address list sync between our different divisions."

Finding the right partner is invaluable

The IT team at FirstGroup highly values their relationship with Quest. "If another company asked for my advice about IT migrations, I would say, 'Don't think that you can do it on your own,'" says Lynch. "Quest has done thousands of migrations and I haven't, and everybody I've met from Quest has been very keen to make my project a success. They made me feel like I mattered and my organization mattered and my projects mattered, which has been brilliant. And when we've hit bumps in the road, they've worked at incredible pace to fix those issues. Frankly, when I looked at the complexity of what we're trying to do, the fact that they've been a partner and have been with us every step of the way is a massive positive for me."

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> *John Windsor, Infrastructure Architect, FirstGroup*

About Quest

Quest creates software solutions that make the benefits of new technology real in an increasingly complex IT landscape. From database and systems management, to Active Directory and Office 365 management, and cyber security resilience, Quest helps customers solve their next IT challenge now. Quest Software. Where next meets now.

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