



Material+

CASE STUDY

Merged employees get single sign-on to make a Material difference in work life

Avanade partners with the customer experience leader to improve collaboration

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Business situation

Building a unified brand through mergers and acquisitions

Material is a strategy, insights, design and technology partner for companies striving for true customer-centricity. To that end, the company recently brought 12 separate legal entities together under one company to provide its clients with a unique mix of business, experience and brand solutions.

While several of these entities used the **Microsoft 365** platform, others relied on Google Workspace. Additionally, having different email domains and productivity tools made collaboration and visibility between colleagues and clients complex. As brand experience experts, Material was prepared to meet these challenges. The company knew that it needed to deliver a secure, compelling and collaborative employee experience to attract and retain talent and create a strong team environment. Rather than doing this by consolidating under a single technology stack, the company understood that interoperability between solutions offers a competitive advantage and is important for maintaining productivity.

“We’ve been able to address the needs of our people more effectively by embracing the tools they use and the processes that work for them.”

Brad Bazley

Senior Vice President, Information Technology,
Material

The company partnered with Avanade to modernize and streamline its IT identity infrastructure so that all 1,500+ employees can be authenticated through a single **Microsoft Azure Active Directory (AAD)** and feel like one company while still having access to the tools they’re comfortable with. Specifically, we set out to create:

- A single, secure Active Directory tenant with all users, groups and permissions correctly applied. Consolidating, standardizing and implementing AAD with enhanced security controls helps reduce cybersecurity risks.
- A common email domain and unified, global address book for easier contact and visibility between employees and to strengthen the Material brand identity.
- Email/calendar interoperability between users, enabling collaboration across platforms.

Solution

Enabling secure collaboration

Using agile methodology, we structured the modern workplace design work around identity, access control, security and technology interoperability with the goal of migrating all employees to AAD. This followed a carefully planned roadmap to:

1. Design, define and establish an appropriate identity foundation
2. Consolidate multiple existing Active Directory tenants into a single, primary AAD tenant
3. Manage and secure Google Workspace by integrating with AAD for single sign-on, MFA and user provisioning
4. Consolidate user groups
5. Implement the phased migration and integrate user identities and security permissions into AAD

This identity foundation and migration allowed for a common email domain for all Material employees and a shared address book per the company’s goals. Avanade also helped standardize the use of **Microsoft Teams** to reach users on both Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace platforms to increase collaboration and make it easier for employees to do their jobs.

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Establishing this level of security and interoperability between Microsoft and Google users while strengthening the user experience was a complex process. "This was a very thoughtfully-planned and carefully-executed modernization process, but we also knew that the number of variables in play would be more than we could have anticipated," says Brad Bazley, senior vice president, information technology at Material. "We resolved that whatever issues arose and whatever caused them, we were just going to throw ourselves into fixing them and empathetically supporting our teams while they adapted to new ways of working together. That level of hyper care is what differentiated this initiative and helped make it successful."

Results

Employees come together as one company

Since migrating its own employees across multiple entities onto a single AAD tenant, Material is demonstrating it can "walk the talk" as digital transformation partners. Additionally, it has realized several significant business benefits:

- A 53% increase in employees actively using Microsoft Teams on a daily basis.
- A 60% faster response and resolution time for employees' support requests, meaning they can spend less time waiting for their IT issues to be fixed and more time focused on client work.
- By enabling a secure, hybrid remote work environment, the company has seen a 47% increase in its Microsoft Secure Score for identity. Its score is now 9% higher than industry benchmarks.
- Streamlining access and removing the duplicate users/ shared mailboxes necessary to support separate entities has removed barriers to collaboration across the company.

"Fundamentally, we can do things faster with less effort," says Bazley. "For example, when someone needs a new distribution list or shared mailbox set up, we can now do that immediately. If someone wants to book a meeting with or collaborate with a colleague within another one of our business units, it's much easier. We're finally able to act as one company, focus on more impactful work, and because things can be done more efficiently within our teams, it's had a positive impact on client satisfaction as well."

"Avanade was there for the whole process – they understood where we needed to be, and because we were aligned on the destination, we always had a clear idea and path forward when challenges arose."

Brad Bazley

Senior Vice President, Information Technology,
Material

Bazley also has a message for those looking to achieve the same interoperability across multiple platforms: "This project wasn't a simple shift to the cloud and that was never how we looked at it," he says. "If you want to serve your clients or your people in a modern workplace, you really need to meet them where they are. That's what we've done here."

About Material

Material is a global strategy, insights, design, and technology partner to companies striving for true customer-centricity and ongoing relevance in a digital first, customer-led world. By leveraging proprietary, science-based tools that enable human understanding, we inform and create customer-centric business models and experiences + deploy measurement systems - to build transformational relationships between businesses and the people they serve. Learn more at materialplus.io.

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About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 56,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees and their customers. Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com

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