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CASE STUDY

Avanade transforms its digital workplace to drive productivity

Innovative Microsoft technologies simplify business, access and jobs

Avanade applies its business performance expertise to its own internal operations to demonstrate its role as a leading digital innovator. By adopting an array of Microsoft technology solutions, it has simplified its business operations to support a more engaging and productive digital workplace environment for its employees.

Situation: Leading by example

Headquartered in Seattle, Washington, Avanade excels in helping its clients maximize their business performance through strategy, technology, process and change enablement improvement, and it wanted to apply that same expertise to its own internal operations. This increasingly requires cloud solutions to support a highly mobile and dispersed workforce. To improve employee productivity and efficiency, Avanade chose to adopt the same Microsoft technology solutions that it champions and offers to its own clients. "Our digital transformation started a few years ago, when we wanted to focus on what we call our 'simplification agenda,'" explained Bob Bruns, chief information and security officer at Avanade. "That is, we want it to be simple to do business both with Avanade and within Avanade."

Solution: A three-tiered approach to workplace innovation

Avanade aims to be the leading digital innovator in its market by drawing on the talent of its people and on expertise and technology within the Microsoft ecosystem. The result is a transformation of clients' businesses for the digital era. It identified three key elements to help ensure success:

1. **Cloud technology** – Avanade adopted Microsoft cloud technologies, including the full range of Microsoft Office 365 components, to empower its digital workplace to operate at scale and at speed. It considers these solutions a key component of its vision, which shows clients how to optimize their business processes using cloud technologies.

   "Our success with Microsoft cloud solutions serves as a proof point for our clients," noted Chris Miller, Avanade executive and security innovation lead. "Better engagement with each other is a key step toward better engagement with our clients."

2. **Mobility** – A critical idea behind the company's simplification agenda is giving workers easy access to information wherever they are, more securely and conveniently.

   Bruns cited Microsoft OneDrive for Business and SharePoint Online as prime examples of how this is happening at Avanade. "SharePoint Online provides team sites that help us collaborate on projects not only internally but also externally with clients," he said. "And OneDrive for Business moves document storage from the PC to a centralized, safer location. The result is that we work together, across different groups, from a single source of truth."

   Consequently, robust support for a mobile workforce is critical for Avanade's simplification agenda.

   "Mobility is profoundly changing the way we work. It's amazing," said Kathrine Lord, former senior director and global mobility lead at Avanade. "If you think about five years ago, we were so limited. But now, with only a smartphone, I can access and update files on OneDrive for Business anywhere, whether I'm at my desk, on the road or picking up my kids. I'm more productive and more available."

   Anywhere access benefits are amplified for people who spend a lot of time in the field. Lord said that, for sellers especially, it's not just about taking a conference call while they're on the road; it's surfacing capabilities that empower them to do their job better. "Sellers can make more informed decisions, improvise and meet client expectations," she said. "They could, for example, retrieve and present an updated PowerPoint deck on the go. The goal is to put everything they need on a single device."

3. **Apps** – Avanade is taking advantage of Microsoft PowerApps to bring the value of wide-ranging corporate resources to mobile devices. PowerApps is a platform and service for creating and running apps using very little code or none at all. It uses the Common Data Service, along with hundreds of predefined, standard business entities so that all Avanade apps can share the same definition of "client," "product," "lead" and so on.

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Miller sees high value in the low code/no code capabilities of PowerApps, particularly in the context of interoperability with SharePoint Online: "With PowerApps, we gain the ability to rapidly prototype, iterate and publish solutions that better connect employees with SharePoint Online, without expensive planning, development and IT maintenance costs."

Specifically, Avanade created the Digital@Your Fingertips mobile app, which employees use to find and access content on their smartphones that previously required cumbersome intranet searching.

"People previously struggled to find what they needed in an abyss of documents, links and resources delivered in the intranet search results," said Lord. With minimal effort, her team used PowerApps to develop and publish curated SharePoint Online content inside the app, making it easier for employees to quickly find key information. Lord described how easy updates are now: "Somebody said, 'Hey, wouldn't it be great if we had client evidence in there? Sellers are always looking for client evidence.' And we said, 'Why not? We have it in a SharePoint Online list. Let's just surface it in the app.' So that's what we did. Someone later said, 'Let's add demos.' Now, with three clicks, our sellers are doing demos on a mobile device."

The apps also allow the team to stay better connected with real-time notifications. "We're pushing out messages using Microsoft Flow. For example, when we have new training or a digital workplace session, an automated invitation is sent directly through the app and can be added to calendars right from the phone," continued Lord. "The app also provides access to contacts, training materials, an image library, the Avanade Insights blog, the Avanade Inc. video channel, information about the company's offerings, employee feedback and more."

Results: A digital workplace that simplifies jobs

Avanade considers Office 365 foundational to its digital workplace, which is about the right tools for the right job – and an underlying ecosystem that brings it all together. Jason Hunt, Avanade executive and digital lead for North America, tied this idea in with mobility. "As a salesperson, if you're in the office, you're likely not selling. If the mobile experience isn't the primary experience, we're probably doing the digital workplace wrong."

He went on to explain how applying the right tools – SharePoint Online in this case – benefits the whole company. "I can check in a file on SharePoint Online and know that it's immediately available to a team, to clients or to other apps," said Hunt. "It's all part of one backend infrastructure that flows information into whatever work environment makes sense for the circumstance. It's a very, very powerful way to work."

Michelle Caldwell, digital employee experience offering lead for the West region at Avanade, appreciates the choices that cloud and mobility technologies offer. "I work with people who have many different working modalities," Caldwell noted. "They can work and collaborate differently based on their situation, background and the solutions they feel comfortable with, whether they're in the office, remote or traveling. I love that we have the capability to work with each other from anywhere yet still feel like we're all connected in one digital workplace."

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About Avanade
Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud-enabling services, business solutions and design-led experiences, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 30,000 professionals in 24 countries. Visit us at www.avanade.com

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