



Ageas invests in Google Apps to support future business growth



At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Find a communications and collaboration solution for agents that was reliable, secure and scalable for growth
- Reduce IT complexity
- Increase agent productivity
- Take advantage of new innovations from Google

What they did

- Selected Google Apps for Business for its no-hassle, cloud-based model for email, document sharing and legacy infrastructure replacement

What they accomplished

- Established a reliable, scalable and feature-rich communications and collaboration solution
- Drove innovation and productivity amongst its agents
- Enabled agents to work when, where, and how they need

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—Henk ten Bos, Chief Information Officer, Ageas Insurance

Company

Ageas Insurance Company (Asia) Limited ("Ageas") is one of the largest life insurance companies in Hong Kong and a part of the Ageas Group, an international insurance group with a heritage spanning more than 180 years. In Hong Kong, Ageas has grown rapidly and now has nearly 3,000 independent agents providing financial consulting services to their customers.

Challenges

Up until early 2010, Ageas relied on an appliance called Mirapoint to support its email and calendaring functions that were provided to the insurance agents. However, foreseeing strong growth ahead, Ageas saw the need to address the solution's limitations.

Henk ten Bos, Chief Information Officer at Ageas Insurance, Hong Kong explains, "Since the solution was hosted internally and based on an appliance with limited space, in an environment where our company strategy was to grow, we would eventually hit capacity limits."

An internal survey at the time also showed that some of their agents wanted to share content with other agents. At the same time, the staff from Ageas' training academy was looking for a better way to share training materials with the agents.

When their Mirapoint licenses were up for renewal in 2010, Ageas decided to take a look at cloud-based solutions to cater for these communications, data and growth requirements.

"It made sense to leverage the cloud for solutions such as the e-office solution for our agents because it required a lot of infrastructure and effort to manage in-house," ten Bos said. "The benefits from reduced IT infrastructure costs, management and downtime were too significant to overlook."

Solution

As a leading financial services company, Ageas placed utmost importance on governance and security. So although Google Apps for Business seemed an obvious choice as a cloud-based solution for them, they decided to engage consulting partner Master Concept to work with Google to deliver a Proof-Of-Concept (POC) to see if Google could address these concerns.

"We wanted to determine if Google could meet our enterprise expectations and to demonstrate that its solutions could work well within our environment," said ten Bos. "We did a POC for five to six months to test out the solution from a user perspective, to look at integration with our internal infrastructure and to address our security concerns. In the end, the POC was deemed successful and we were ready to go to production."

Ageas also conducted a survey with their agents to get feedback on their level of comfort moving to the new Google environment and the response was largely positive, as many of them were already familiar with using Google from using Gmail as their personal email platform.

About Google Apps

Google Apps is a cloud-based productivity suite that helps you and your team connect and get work done from anywhere on any device. Google Apps includes Gmail, Google Calendar (shared calendaring), Google Drive (online content storage and sharing), and Google Docs, Sheets & Slides (document creation and collaboration).

For more information, visit
www.google.com.sg/apps

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*—Henk ten Bos, Chief Information Officer,
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With the success of the POC and endorsement from agents, Ageas made the decision to transition to Google's cloud solution and found the process to be quick and issue free. "The migration was executed smoothly and took less than a month to complete, with no data loss and no downtime. We did not receive a single complaint - not even during or right after the migration. Our agents were very happy with the new environment," said ten Bos.

Results

Google Apps for Business has helped Ageas add key business functionalities for the insurance agents and increased IT capacity, without adding costly layers of complexity to their technology infrastructure.

"Everything that my IT team used to manage themselves when supporting the insurance agents - machines, bandwidth, infrastructure, capacity - is now taken care of by Google. And since Google is a secure but publicly available Internet environment, we don't have to worry about providing bandwidth. Our agents can use and view documents and videos as much as they like without having any impact on bandwidth required from our data centre," said ten Bos. "Capacity for growth is also important. We don't have to worry if the agency force grows faster than originally expected because with Google the whole provisioning aspect is not a concern anymore. From an IT perspective, these are significant benefits."

According to ten Bos, Google's mobile device management tools also eliminated the need to provide a separate solution for mobile device management in their own data centres - a demand that would have been of additional concern to Ageas: "With more agents using mobile devices for work purposes, the IT team does not have to worry about the type of devices they are using or the amount of IT support required to ensure these devices are properly protected in case of loss or theft. We can avoid additional effort and cost because the Google Apps platform comes with some basic functions for mobile device management which are sufficient for our agents."

From the agents' perspective, the Google Apps environment provides a robust platform with more tools to use in their business - from communication tools such as email and Google Chat to collaborative features such as file sharing and editing - all of which are standard offerings with the Google Apps suite. And with Google's regular updates to its suite of applications, Ageas' employees have access to many innovations and features as soon as they are available in the cloud.

"From a user perspective, especially if you compare to what we were able to deliver in terms of service three to four years ago, our agents now have a much richer experience and have more tools at their disposal to manage the work they do," explains ten Bos. "We chose the Google environment not just because of the potential of the cloud to help increase IT efficiency, but also because Google demonstrated strong capabilities to remain relevant to us in the future."

With these on-going innovations and benefits, Google Apps for Business is Ageas' insurance that they are getting the best out of IT to transform their business.

