

Achieving Office 365 migration on an unprecedented scale

+ WUNDERMAN THOMPSON

At a glance:

Client: Wunderman Thompson

Industry: Digital services

Location: 200 offices across 90 locations, worldwide

Destination technology environment: Microsoft Office 365

Number of users: 20,000

Number of Markets served: 90



The Client:

Part of the international advertising group, WPP, global digital agency, Wunderman Thompson employs over 20,000 staff, who work within 200 offices worldwide. The company was founded in 2018 through the merger of global ad agency, J Walter Thompson, and digital agency, Wunderman.

Described as 'part creative agency, part consultancy, part technology company', Wunderman Thompson is a global powerhouse that boasts clients including The United Nations, Netflix, Unilever, HSBC and Heineken.

The Need:

Wunderman Thompson's 20,000 users are spread across 90 global markets. Until 8 December 2019 each of these markets had been using its own tools and platforms to manage and store its own data.

Working across multiple tenants was causing significant challenges for the otherwise unified business. Removing this digital divide would enable all businesses within the group to collaborate effectively – from video conferencing and global online events to day-to-day working. The ability to communicate seamlessly and work together effortlessly are a vital combination when it comes to driving operational efficiency.



The migration to Microsoft Office 365 was a phenomenal challenge that united Wunderman Thompson as an organisation and was achieved by partnership working in the truest sense.

“The decision to migrate to a cloud-based service was a difficult process involving a lot of discussion at the highest levels of the company. It wasn’t as simple as merging two businesses into one: Wunderman Thompson was formed from the amalgamation of multiple organisations, each of which was attached to its own way of doing things, and some grounded in a very different, on-prem technology space.”

– Steve Bumba, Director, Portfolio and Solutions, Wunderman Thompson

The decision of parent company, WPP, to consolidate all users into a single tenant within the WPP Cloud was both logical and practical – even if achieving the task in a business of this size was a challenge of astronomical proportions.

With tens of thousands of users worldwide, this complex and unique mega migration involved vast quantities of data and access rights within an extremely tight timescale. The entire project needed to be completed in just nine weeks, with a single cutover event during the weekend of 6 to 8 December 2019, to minimise disruption to the business.

The Solution:

With over 50 years’ combined experience of tackling complex, large-scale migration projects, Nero Blanco were the obvious choice to take on the challenge. Big enough to work with some of the most well-known companies around the globe, yet agile enough to provide a personal and highly efficient service, the Nero Blanco team have developed a reputation for their high-calibre service and guaranteed no-risk, on-time delivery.

Nero Blanco managed this end-to-end migration project using a combination of three configured, best of breed SaaS solutions, a transparent, collaborative approach, and creative problem solving.



The complexity and sheer number of players involved presented very different challenges within the organisation – but all unanimously agreed with the need for unification.

As a solutions team we're always looking to achieve our goals in the most efficient and logical way. It's an approach that was highly compatible with Nero Blanco – our biggest challenge was to get past the size of their business! We're used to working with names you see on the NASDAQ, so the thought of trusting a project of this scale to a team of five... let's just say it was a hurdle we needed to overcome!

People think of WPP as a single organisation, but we're a host of different companies working as a single unit. We need partners to appreciate and understand this reality, and to work, learn and tackle challenges together.

Even the largest of vendors kickstart projects with assurances that everything is good, and nothing will be too much trouble. Somewhere along the line, the doubt kicks in and suddenly we hear "we had no idea!".

– Steve Bumba, Director, Portfolio and Solutions, Wunderman Thompson

Under the guidance of project lead, Twan van Beers, Nero Blanco delivered on the following scope of work:

Agreed deliverables:

- planning and discovery
- pre-migration tasks
- configure BitTitan Migration Wiz
- configure the SharePoint migration farm solution
- configure the Teams migration farm solution
- run pilot
- single cutover event over the weekend of 6/8 December 2019
- ongoing support during the fortnight after migration

Migration details and data:

- 14,750 mailboxes from Microsoft Exchange
- 8,100 Teams channels comprising 50TB of data, accessed by the entire user population
- 165 SharePoint sites, consisting of 25TB of source data
- 11,720 OneDrive accounts with around 350TB of data
- migration of file and folder permissions



When you appreciate that the sheer scale and structure of the group has thrown vendors the size of Microsoft, you can understand our hesitation to work with a smaller company. It's fair to say that working with Nero Blanco was a groundbreaking decision, but our CIO, Jamie McClellan, encouraged us to take the risk. By taking things one step at a time we discovered that size simply wasn't an issue with the level of skill, talent and experience they offer.

We're highly flexible as a team so, culturally, Nero Blanco were a good fit. It's common for IT consultants to have a stringent, fixed approach that's more about their systems and processes than the problem they're solving for the client. As a smaller business, they were able to offer a level of agile flexibility we have never found with a larger organisation.

The migration was a truly unique project that uncovered undocumented limitations in the software that even the ISVs weren't aware of, and which stretched Nero Blanco's scripting ability to the limits – but we worked shoulder to shoulder as a team to address issues as they arose, and we learned together as a result.

The sheer size of the project – and the need to achieve the migration within just nine weeks – meant it was necessary to pre-stage. There were lots of moving parts to keep track of and plenty of curve balls along the way but Twan had our back throughout. He tirelessly worked his magic, ensuring everyone was reconciled in the back end, creating high level integration between scripting and the three software solutions, and always ensuring solutions that were acceptable to us as business. I'm not sure Twan got any sleep towards the end of the project... in fact, I'm not sure any of us did!

Frankly, if Nero Blanco hadn't helped us to achieve the migration to a single tenant before the impact of Covid-19, it's hard to imagine how we would have coped with the challenges of lockdown. Thanks to Nero Blanco, Microsoft Teams did what it was designed to do – it united us as a business and enabled us to power through the pandemic with minimal disruption. For that, I am incredibly grateful."

– Steve Bumba, Director, Portfolio and Solutions, Wunderman Thompson