

European migration of a global pharma powerhouse



At a glance:

Client: Chugai Pharma Europe

Industry: Pharmaceuticals

Location: Three European countries

Services provided:

Migrating all Chugai Europe and US users into the global Chugai Japan Microsoft Office 365 tenant

Number of users: 315

Number of workstations: 356

Number of mailboxes: 471

Number of teams: 555



The client:

Chugai Pharma Europe – part of the Japan-based pharmaceutical giant Chugai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd (Chugai) – prides itself on collaboration and excellence to bring new medicines to patients around the world. Headquartered in London, UK, the business employs approximately 200 people throughout three European countries. Since 2002, Chugai has been a member of the Roche Group – one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies.

The need:

Both Chugai and Chugai Pharma Europe had used Microsoft Office 365 for some years – but their use of separate Microsoft tenants was limiting opportunities for collaboration and communication throughout every area of the business.

Functionality within the various applications was limited – and resolving access issues was time-consuming and fraught with problems.

In 2021, Senior Management of the Japan-headquartered Chugai initiated a major project to migrate all data and collaboration services from the existing European and US Microsoft 365 tenant to the Asia tenant. The overriding aims of the project were to enhance governance and security, and to simplify communication and collaboration for Chugai employees worldwide.



The migration was a learning point for us here at Chugai Europe. As part of a global pharmaceutical giant, there's an expectation that we'll commission one of the big four' GSI vendors to handle these types of projects.

But when the outcome is mission critical – touching every part of the company on a day-to-day basis, and keeping the business running – getting the knowledge, experience and expert support we needed was more important than size.

Not only did working with Nero Blanco cost us around 20 times less – the end result was probably 20 times more efficient!"

– David Howell, Head of IT Europe, Chugai Pharma Europe

The solution:

Though Chugai Europe's Head of IT, David Howell, had worked on migrations before, the company simply didn't have the resource to manage the migration internally. The natural next step was to invite Chugai's incumbent IT vendor to tender for the project.

After completion of a technical assessment and a significant amount of exploratory work, the business responded with an estimated cost of several million dollars – significantly outside the expected budget for this project.

It was clear an alternative approach was required. Howell set to work researching the market for a specialist vendor with extensive experience of managing complex migrations for global corporations. Despite being a smaller company than the incumbent, UK-based Nero Blanco stood out for their vast migration experience, technical expertise and partnership approach, and were selected to provide support with the migration activities.

The first task was to complete a large amount of preparatory work – including technical assessment of the various migration tools, tenant configurations and enabling major AADC version updates in Japan – to prepare for a proof of concept (POC) migration that would take place in the first quarter of 2022.

The aim of this trial run was to identify and resolve any potential issues with combining the two tenants before the full migration, and to assess the business impact of the migration.

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From Nero Blanco’s early involvement through to completion of the project, project lead, Conrad Murray, and the team demonstrated a vital understanding of the cultural issues and etiquette inherent in working with a Japanese organisation – something many vendors overlook.

They were delightful to work with, and there’s no doubt in my mind that the project wouldn’t have gone as well without them. I can’t recommend Nero Blanco strongly enough and wouldn’t use anyone else in future.

Senior management in Chugai Japan are delighted with the end result, as are the management teams in Europe and US.

If you’re thinking of carrying out a Microsoft 365 migration for your business, I’d strongly recommend making sure you have the right partner – in the form of Nero Blanco – on your side. It makes life a whole lot easier.”

– David Howell, Head of IT Europe, Chugai Pharma Europe

The POC migration – which used a test domain and data from leavers – highlighted several issues that were quickly addressed before the migration of the production domains. Without this step, the effectiveness and success of the project would have been severely impacted. Aside from a couple of minor issues that were resolved quickly, and with minimal business impact, the POC migration was a success, and a vital part of the full migration process.

The migration from the source tenant to the global tenant was carried out both seamlessly and efficiently in a single cutover event over the last weekend of March 2022. The expected results were met with heightened security, simplified access and better collaboration throughout the business, with no restrictions in functionality.



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- **Reassurance:** we make complex things simple
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