neroblanco

New standards of project excellence from a merger-driven Microsoft Migration

At a glance:

Client: The world's leading provider of technology-enabled language services

Industry: Language services

Location: Global

Services provided: Migrating all users into a single greenfield Microsoft Office 365 tenant, supported by ongoing managed IT service and support

Number of users: 70,000 (including 60,000+ external users for vendors and customers)

Number of AD domains: 11

Number of workstations: 9,355

Number of groups: 429,620

Number of attributes: 20 million

The client:

Our client is the world's leading provider of technology-enabled language, content management and intellectual property services, helping businesses connect with customers worldwide.

Based in the UK with operations around the globe, the business boasts an impressive client list. This includes 90 of the top 100 global brands – from Facebook and Google, to Volvo and Land Rover – as well as the top 10 pharmaceutical companies and 18 of the top 20 patent filers worldwide.

In 2021 they acquired an intelligent language and content company that provides innovative, industry-leading language solutions at every stage of the translation supply chain. Among them are freelance translators, language service providers, corporate language departments and academic institutions.

The acquisition represented the UK's largest tech deal of the year, and meant that – for the first time in the history of the language services industry – a UK company would lead the market.

> "
> While our migration project was deeply complex it was clear that Nero Blanco had managed migrations with even greater levels of complexity and scale. They capably managed our initial concerns and questions and quickly gained our full trust.
>
> – Head of Technical Architecture

Workloads:

- **11,964** SharePoint sites
- **8,314** Teams & Groups
- **14,360** Exchange Online Mailbox
- **714** Exchange Online Mailbox Archives
- **9,330** Exchange (private chat only)
- **8,653** OneDrive
- **84** Yammer
- **84** Cloud Flows
- **857** Classic Stream Videos

Tools:

BitTitan MigrationWiz UMB/ AvePoint/ShareGate/Apps4Pro: **10,000+** licenses

PowerSyncPro Dir Sync **70,000** licenses: three years

PowerSyncPro Migration Agent (per workstation): **10,000+** licenses used during the project. PowerSyncPro Migration Agent will also be used for future Active Directory migrations.

The need:

Much like any business that's grown through acquisition, this industry leader had a complex infrastructure and a large amount of technical debt due to a number of legacy applications – a situation that was exacerbated by the latest acquisition.

Efficient communication and collaboration between teams is critical to success. – But it's also next to impossible to deliver while users, data and workspaces exist in more than one Microsoft tenant. The priority was to unite the businesses in one streamlined tenant.

With a combined workforce of around 9,000 users, the two businesses had similar-sized Microsoft tenants. One way or another, these needed to combine to remove the inevitable communication barriers caused by operating as two separate entities, and to facilitate a seamless office experience.

The solution:

Nero Blanco were introduced to the client following a recommendation that described the team as "the world leaders in Microsoft migrations".

Nero Blanco's technical prowess was quickly evident from their responses to the client's initial questions and concerns. Therefore, Nero Blanco were engaged to handle the project –from initial scoping and project design through single-cutover migration, to ongoing support.

> "After a three month scoping exercise the delivery phase lasted around nine months. We worked closely with Nero Blanco to agree on the best way to mobilise our people and work streams, then organised our project team around delivery work streams and functional areas.
>
> Highlander was seen as a great success internally, and Nero Blanco were key to empowering us to meet our objectives, budget and timelines. I can't thank them enough."
>
> – Head of Technical Architecture

Deliverables:

Design and solution

- High-level design document and settings spreadsheet
- Group-based licensing model
- RBAC model
- Create and configure new Microsoft 365 tenant
- Create and configure new Active Directory Forest
- Build and configure BitTitan MigrationWiz projects
- Build and configure Apps4.Pro projects
- Build, configure and test PSP Sync service
- Deploy PowerSyncPro Migration Agent for Windows 10
- Cutover
- Two weeks' post-project support

Ongoing managed support

- PSP managed support in place from March 2023

The options:

After an in-depth audit and analysis of their environments, Nero Blanco helped the client define the right migration path from three options:

1. Migrate all of the acquired company's users into our client's existing tenant
2. Migrate all of our client's users into the acquired company's existing tenant
3. Migrate all client and acquired company's users into a new greenfield Microsoft 365 tenant

Option three was the most complex, costly and technically challenging. It required the synchronisation of identities from both sides before migrating all workloads, tenants and devices – yet it also offered the greatest business benefits.

The decision:

The business agreed to proceed with option three: a future-proof alternative that provided both businesses with a fresh start., This route offered potential for seamless future expansion through further mergers and acquisitions and, of course, the unification required for effective operational efficiency.

Nero Blanco designed the architecture solution for the migration, and phase one of the project – internally dubbed Highlander – kicked off in May 2022.

Phase one consisted of a three-month discovery process that helped Nero Blanco gain a deep understanding of the potential challenges and agree on an approach.

Phase two involved design and planning, followed by the migration of ~70,000 users (including ~60,000+ external user accounts for vendors and customers), 14,360 Mailboxes, 11,964 SharePoint sites, 8,314 Teams & Groups 9,000 workstations over a single cutover weekend, removing the need for profile recreation and coexistence.

"

Nero Blanco enabled us to under-promise and over-deliver on what was a challenging and vital transformation project. From a design perspective, their expertise allowed us to understand the viable options and to shape the most sensible solution for our organisation.

And, of course, their experience was vital during the execution phase. They've seen all the potential problems before and were able to quickly provide mitigation solutions and recommendations to resolve them."

– Head of Technical Architecture

The results

The client is a 24/7 global business. Downtime is, quite literally, money, and needed to be kept to a minimum. With the bulk of the migration taking place over a single cutover weekend – and teams fully briefed to expect a somewhat bumpy landing – staff in the US were encouraged to go home early on Friday, while the Asian contingent were told to return to the office late the following Monday.

Despite careful management of expectations, the predicted bumps were not forthcoming!

In reality, the project was delivered on time and on budget – with minimal operational disruption and loss of productivity.

Thanks to Nero Blanco's big bang approach, the vast majority of the business's 9,000 workstations had migrated by 11am on the Monday after the cutover weekend.

The migration had progressed largely without incident, earning widespread, ongoing recognition for the IT function. Today, Highlander has become the recognised standard for project transformation.

The project was delivered on time and on budget, with minimal operational disruption and loss of productivity.

Progressing largely without incident – and earning widespread recognition for the IT function – it has become the recognised standard for project transformation.

Extend your IT team with Nero Blanco

Imagine what it's like to have Nero Blanco's expertise and experience on tap – when and where you need it. Your internal IT team do a good job of day-to-day helpdesk provision and occasional larger projects, but you could really use a strategic partner to handle more complex plans, to ensure you're leveraging the best that Microsoft has to offer, and to keep your organisation running smoothly. If you'd like us to handle your mega migration from on-prem servers to the cloud – or you're looking for reliable and proactive ongoing support – **get in touch**. We'd love to show you how we can help.

The benefits of working with Nero Blanco:

- **Flexible service:** IT that's designed around your business
- **Technical expertise on tap:** no more struggling with IT challenges
- **Responsive and fast:** we're there when you need us
- **Affordable solution:** a cost-effective way to outsource your IT function
- **Fully scalable:** increase your level of support as your business grows
- **Reassurance:** we make complex things simple
- **Peace of mind:** with over 50 years of combined experience, there's not a challenge we haven't overcome.