



Adoption & Practices

Leading financial services firm supports new workstyles, improves information governance with Egnyte

June 2017

A leading global financial services firm has deployed technology from Egnyte both on-premise and in the cloud in order to provide seamless access to information to employees (office-based and mobile) and external partners worldwide. It's enabled it to adapt to and support new mobile and collaborative workstyles, and consolidate information governance arrangements in a new era of self-service access to content.

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Case study key facts

Organisation	Leading investment and financial services firm
Industry	Financial Services
Current goals	This firm has worked to provide seamless access to information via a content services platform that aligns better with the diverse workstyles encountered across its global offices – allowing users to collaborate across groups and offices on a shared platform, from any device at any time. Its goal has been to effectively and safely support key use cases where employees need to work with external partners and service providers.
Current approach	This firm has deployed Egnyte technology to on-premise file servers for office-based users, in combination with Egnyte cloud access for mobile users (with file synchronisation between all the various endpoints). It started by migrating individual users' 'My Documents' folders first (in a seamless way that preserved drive mapping conventions), before moving on to managing shared team files and any more advanced use cases.
Outcome	<p>Egnyte has given the company a "true single source of truth" for working documents, whether they're internal or external. Files can be left in their original locations on-premise, with internal users accessing them as they did before, but external / mobile users can now connect to the same content securely through a variety of mechanisms.</p> <p>The roll-out has had the added benefit of putting information governance conversations on the agenda with business teams, and enabled IT to review arrangements going into a new era of self-service access to content.</p> <p>Egnyte's ease-of-use and the platform's 'heavy lifting' has also seen IT start not to have to worry about "the nuts and bolts of the services", instead looking at how it can leverage the content services to add more value internally.</p>
Tools and suppliers used	Egnyte, Microsoft SharePoint, Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft Azure

Organisation background

The subject of this case study is a leading global investment and financial services firm. It was founded over 25 years ago and now employs over 500 people in over 20 offices across Europe, Asia and the Americas. It's completed over 300 investments globally in a wide range of industries. MWD Advisors spoke to its Global Head of IT in the preparation of this report.

Project background

Our interviewee reported that his company's infrastructure has historically been able to provide its workforce with a "basic" level of collaboration. Users shared content, through various means – but the sharing didn't really result in real collaboration around the content in any well-managed way.

This company was looking for a way to improve usability and security; and provide seamless access to information via content services that aligned better with the diverse workstyles encountered across its global offices (both for on-side and mobile workers). It was looking for a product that would allow it to host files in multiple countries whilst still allowing users to collaborate across groups / offices on a shared platform – in order to access files on any device at any time.

It wanted the ability for files to 'follow the employee' and have access not be restricted to specific devices or connectivity choices; in addition it wanted collaboration features that could be leveraged across multiple environments. That collaboration requirement wasn't restricted to the company's employees working together on internal projects (whether within or across office locations); since it started looking at content sharing and collaboration practice in early 2016, the company saw an increasing number of use cases where employees worked with external partners and service providers – and needed tools in order to do this effectively and safely. Formerly its employees were relying on email and attachments, with significant limitations around security and the management of multiple versions of a document in the wild.

Our interviewee (the company's Global Head of IT) was the main champion for the project that brought these capabilities to its employees worldwide.

Implementation characteristics and status

This financial services firm has implemented Egnyte as its content services platform, providing access to sharable content (with collaboration features) from its own datacentres on-premise and Egnyte's cloud. Egnyte on-premise file servers are located in the company's London and New York offices; Egnyte cloud access is provided to mobile users on their laptops, iPads and iPhones. File synchronisation occurs between all the various endpoints.

One of key reasons this firm chose Egnyte's technology was the vendor's ability to provide access to files from large number of different endpoints (from the cloud and on-premise; supporting both online and offline access) – thereby giving employees the flexibility they needed. In addition, Egnyte's integrations with Microsoft Office 365 have allowed users to author and edit documents directly through Egnyte's web UI, or using apps on their iPads, with content stored under management in Egnyte in the cloud.

In the past the company has had a multi-layered approach to cloud adoption – with some services in SaaS, some in IaaS or PaaS, and some on a private cloud; and traditionally a service would be deployed distinctly in one of these modes. However, over the couple of years (since embarking on its Egnyte deployment), it's seeing a need to evolve its cloud strategy, leading to services being split across different layers. With Egnyte, for example, it has some file services in SaaS, some in Microsoft Azure, and some on premise – all to accommodate different use cases and the different working models that suit end users (say, in the office and needing low-latency; or travelling and needing to access data over the public Internet with the option to synchronise offline).

As for next steps, this firm does have ambitions to extend its use of Egnyte further into its business processes and workflows, but it's keen to "get the basics right for syncing and sharing files first". It's not looking to embrace 'live collaboration' capabilities, just yet; preferring to 'master walking before it attempts to run' – focusing on the incremental adoption steps required in changing people's practice from "old school email habits" to using Egnyte's content services for sharing to start with.

As Egnyte technology becomes more familiar to employees, though – and the case for cloud services backed up by security and governance features such as data geo-specificity – this financial services firm envisages that there'll be less argument for keeping data on-premise, leading to increased interest in what cloud-based solutions can do to add value; and that this will fuel greater adoption and a "pull" for new services, leading to further improvements to support for modern working practices.

The approach

This financial services firm needed a true hybrid solution that would address the needs of both internal users' on-premise content scenarios, and external or mobile users' requirements for a cloud-based offering. Egnyte was the only vendor it evaluated that could deliver a true hybrid experience for its content sharing and collaboration use cases.

Though the company had considered Box because of its strong partner ecosystem (it still rates Egnyte as needing to improve here), it found Box's cloud-only approach to be too restrictive to cover all its use cases. It also looked at using a combination of Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint Online (it uses SharePoint for internal content sharing), but found that this didn't provide a good enough experience for its external partners. Tools like Dropbox and Citrix ShareFile were considered too: however, it found that all had limitations which – for its particular use cases – would require it to manage a second copy of some documents in a different storage bucket alongside a cloud-hosted one. Although the company was using Citrix to limited effect, it was finding that model difficult to manage. For instance, ShareFile didn't provide the means for the company to backup a separate copy of its data – i.e it was fully reliant on ShareFile; the archiving feature required by regulators was not compatible with ShareFile's enterprise account (which was required for single sign-on); ShareFile required that files be moved into a separate 'ShareFile' folder, whereas with Egnyte, the company is able to retain its existing network mappings.

The initial project to deploy Egnyte wasn't so much a pilot, as a "hefty proof-of-concept", moving quickly from desk research and testing to a phased go-live.

This was restricted to users' 'My Documents' folders to start with (across seven months during 2016) with the aim of migrating users own files (rather than shared team resources) quickly and painlessly, without the users even noticing the end storage location had changed because they were able to continue accessing them (from a mapped drive in Windows File Explorer on their desktops) in exactly the same way as before. Once that change was in place across the company, this financial services firm's IT team revealed the new system as Egnyte – and promoting new benefits, such as the availability to synchronise content offline to iPads, etc. as a prelude to raising awareness of other features that could be brought to bear if teams chose additionally to have their team files migrated too (alongside their individual filestores). Currently, that move from individual to team file migration is one the IT team is waiting for interest and 'pull' from business teams before rolling out, rather than continuing to 'push' more change.

The roll-out was driven by the company's Global Head of IT – who also counts himself as a passionate stakeholder in the project. He describes the process as typical for the company, in that it was driven by IT and pushed out to the business. However, although the project's genesis was in improving the management of file-sharing globally, it's intended that the knock-on effect will have additional business benefits in improving the practice of file sharing amongst teams, with partners, and in collaboration processes themselves.

Strategy

The Egnyte implementation project is part of an enterprise-wide strategy to enable fast access to relevant information for all employees and partners, at all times, wherever they are. Egnyte's solution is seen as a significant enabler of that strategy, seamlessly connecting content stored in local datacentres, on premise, in Egnyte's cloud, and synchronised on individual laptops.

Historically, the company's offices in different continents have had different ways of working. Its plan is to standardise on a single content and collaboration platform with a global file architecture that supports these different modes of working.

Organisation and people

Adoption

The company reports that those users most impacted by frustrations with its old content sharing model (centred around Citrix) have become the most interested parties in the Egnyte project. Although they may not have engaged with the case for Egnyte *per se*, they've understood the benefits the deployment has already brought them – and so are acting as champions for new ways of working amongst their peers.

The company describes itself as still being in the early stages of its journey with Egnyte, following over a decade of remote desktop model working with Citrix. All staff 'My Documents' individual files have been migrated (it recently completed a migration for the 150 staff at its US office, representing over 10,000 documents), but this doesn't represent much of a use case for sharing; that will come with team content folders. At the moment the IT organisation is looking at the content held by teams in each global office to consider the best strategy for getting key files into Egnyte. Whilst a 'lift-and-shift' all-in approach might well be the simplest, the company is well aware that this would include "migrating all the rubbish" too – so it's looking at ways to capitalise on the launch of Egnyte's features to encourage teams to think more about how they work and how they might want to work – with the sharing and collaboration capabilities now at their disposal.

The company reports that this has already happened with key personnel at its US office – and it's using these early change successes to gather some momentum and promote the benefits virally. However, across most of the rest of the company many teams haven't yet felt the need to engage with the project as much (in fact, they may not even have realised their own files had been moved at all, as the migration completed so seamlessly). As Egnyte has rolled out, these champions have discovered new use cases for the technology (such as sharing with externals), resulting in *those* stakeholders becoming more important to the overall project as it has progressed.

Overall, though, the company's Global Head of IT acknowledges that generally it's a "tough" company to roll-out technology change to, as it's not a technology company – and he reminds that Egnyte is one of around 50 services competing for airtime. Cybersecurity remains the company's top priority, and there's a danger that messages on this topic start to strain people's patience levels – hence the tendency with Egnyte to rely on more on viral adoption through champions and evangelists, once users have got beyond the first stage of having their own files moved over.

The Global Head of IT estimates that the project is around 20% complete – everyone in the company except those in its Asia office have had their individual 'My Documents' folders moved to Egnyte (he expects to have extended roll-out to Asia by the end of 2017); in addition, the US office has gone one step further and had all employees' shared (team) data moved to the Egnyte platform too.

Roles and resources

The company works with a managed server provider for its backend and datacentre, and this helped with setting up network storage and Egnyte servers; the rest of the work was done by the in-house IT team.

That team has had to learn how to support a new platform, which, because it manages the company's backend filesystem, is critical to the business; so the team has had to become well-trained in Egnyte. The benefits of the previous centralised Citrix model was that all the company's files were hosted in the UK, where they were easy to manage access from and support. Now, IT has to manage files stored in other regions and at local offices where there hasn't historically been a local support presence – so local support arrangements have become more of a consideration. It now has two support engineers in the US, however moving from desktop support to supporting potential 24-hour access is a challenge. Hence the company's Global Head of IT team is looking to business teams to get more involved in supporting themselves (which is forcing it to clean up permissioning and look at file access, security, roles, etc. so that it can devolve useful support from central IT in a sensible manner).

Governance

The company reports that the challenge of empowering employees to collaborate and share, while also ensuring the needs of information governance (particularly in a regulated industry) are not new– it operated in the same environment before it embarked upon an initiative to move content to the cloud with Egnyte. It's therefore used to having to investigate potential vendor partners thoroughly to ensure that they have the right governance models in place to match the company's own requirements. Its Global Head of IT has "a lot of confidence" that Egnyte is meeting its security requirements because (reasoning that it's a high risk for a SaaS company not to!), and that it's able to invest far more into it than his company could do on its own for in-house measures.

The Egnyte migration project, and its potential for changing working practices, is being used by IT to piggy-back new information governance arrangements and open up better conversations with business teams about how information is used and protected (because of external sharing use cases). For example, now the content for board meetings is on the same platform as sharable content for external partners.

The company is looking at using Egnyte Protect and reporting for governance management (and started investigating the new product in its beta phase six months ago, providing feedback to Egnyte at the time), but it's yet to deploy the service in production.

The company reports that Egnyte has provided it with very good support around regulatory compliance issues; more so than other vendors it considered. For example, FINRA requires unlimited retention of documents, and Egnyte has allowed it to keep track of and retain all its files in a manageable way – something it would have struggled to maintain in-house.

Technology and infrastructure

The company's use of Egnyte for content services is tightly bound up with its use of Microsoft products and services. It's using Office 365, and reports that Egnyte has good integration there, but that it "could go further" with the Microsoft stable – for instance, it would be of benefit if SharePoint could reference Egnyte as a storage area, because the company needs to start making decisions about where wider classifications of files reside (Sharepoint Online, OneDrive, Egnyte, etc.).

Using Egnyte as an enterprise-level file services platform means that all the company's investments in on-premise and cloud-based content need to be tied together seamlessly. It's expecting to go live with an Azure appliance for Egnyte (as it moves one of its datacentres to Azure) at the end of July 2017.

The results

Egnyte has given the company what its Global Head of IT refers to as a “true single source of truth” for working documents, whether they’re internal or external. Egnyte’s ability to synchronise from multiple data sources, supporting different models that meet users’ external collaboration needs, means that files can (for instance) be left in their original locations on-premise using the Egnyte storage appliance – with internal users accessing them as they did before, but external users now connecting to the same content securely through a variety of mechanisms.

Outside of the efforts of key evangelists, the company is not yet reporting much use of Egnyte’s sharing and collaboration features, but is expecting more to come as the content services become more embedded down the line – incrementally realising benefits. The Global Head of IT reminds us that people were using Citrix ShareFile already, and although Egnyte gives users offline access, for instance – this is more of an extension of existing functionality they were used to, than the ability to transform practice and processes.

The roll-out of Egnyte has had the added benefit of putting information governance conversations on the agenda with business teams, and enabled IT to review arrangements going into a new era of more self-service support of user access to content.

Egnyte’s ease-of-use and the platform’s ‘heavy lifting’ has also seen IT able to stop worrying about “the nuts and bolts of the services”, instead looking at how it can leverage the content services to innovate within the business and add more value.

The company reports that the “more entrepreneurial” elements in its workforce are already starting to embrace the new capabilities that Egnyte is rolling out on a regular basis – with champions and evangelists tending to adopt new features that crop up without feeling the need to bother IT. But on the other hand, IT does want to control the process: to make sure security needs and governance requirements are met, as well as to remain aware of emerging practice changes, and where these can be promoted more widely across the company – and how they might affect future statements of requirements. It therefore needs to work closely with Egnyte to understand its roadmap and control releases to end-users in a governed manner. Key to success is IT’s decision to make Egnyte’s roadmap available internally so people can see what’s coming, and it’s also initiated a “first release programme” to give champions early access to new features so they can be supported when adapting their practice, and helped in documenting and understanding features so others can then learn from them.

Recommendations for adopters

In our conversations with the company’s Global Head of IT for this case study, he offered several recommendations for organisations embarking on a similar initiative:

Know the differences between the old and the new ways of doing things, to help users in the transition. Not all content management services manage content in the same (or sometimes expected) way. For instance, the company didn’t initially appreciate differences between Egnyte storage and a traditional Windows platform – there were differences in the way in which permissions are implicitly inherited, which has proven to be quite difficult to work around – although fixes are promised in future releases of the product.

Focus on adoption momentum. This can be a problem in areas of the business where it’s difficult to engage, or where there isn’t a ready supply of eager champions to evangelise for you. It can be a problem when the migration problem is competing for recognition amongst other important IT messages arriving in saturated email inboxes.

Migrate smart – don't just lift-and-shift. Don't assume it's best to migrate all content to the cloud in one go without taking the opportunity to analyse the content and how it's accessed (and by whom). Work with business teams as content owners to re-evaluate your information architecture and explore if new capabilities around collaboration, versioning, etc could help improve or even replace some of your existing business processes. For example, this company is replacing a legacy structure which was based on an office location construct with one that's instead based on teams – as teams span the globe. Egnyte offers it the ability to provide files anywhere, independent of an office's physical location.

Content can kick-start conversations with the business. Capitalise on the need to discuss content use with business teams by opening up conversations about how content is being used, and use this to re-evaluate your information governance policies for a new, sharing, cloud-based age (doing so *with* the business, rather than risking business teams feeling like information governance is done to them by IT).

Best practice insights

This global financial services firm doesn't think of itself in any way as a technology company *per se*, and so the initiative to roll out Egnyte had to be considered in the context of all the other technology-related endeavours championed by its Global Head of IT and his team – where matters of security and regulatory compliance, for example, are paramount.

There's a risk of deployment fatigue, and a risk that long-term goals (of facilitating better content collaboration relationships, and supporting new mobile, self-service workstyles) become derailed if users aren't quick to see immediate benefits, preferably without having felt the pain of technology change (or even noticed it happening). There are new technology evangelists amongst some of the company's staff, and it's been savvy in harnessing their enthusiasm as change champions – but for the most part this project is a lesson in walking before attempting to run; of getting the basics right to earn and retain trust across the business before embarking upon anything which might have a significant impact upon working practices for those who wouldn't have counted themselves as amongst the vanguard.

This trust between IT and the business has also helped where new discussions about information governance have sprung up, as a result of the potential changes in how content is managed and shared via Egnyte; but framed in the context of regulatory requirements (and again, how the new platform can help the company meet its obligations).

The company's Global Head of IT has also been quick to spot where his team can now rely on Egnyte's platform to perform the 'heavy lifting' of service provision that allows his staff to turn their attention to other – more mission-driving, and value-adding – concerns. He's seeing opportunities to re-cast their role, and their relationship with the business, as one more of digital transformation enabler and innovator. However, in a non-technology company, operating within the constraints of a regulated industry, this is a path to tread carefully; hence the steady rollout process, albeit one with ambition and stretch goals.