

Tackling Content Sprawl with Governance Designed to Support Remote Work

In the case of Covid-19, even though we're further apart physically, we have still been working together to get the job done. Ensuring that our business comes out successfully has brought us closer together.

—Tom Hollingsworth | IT Manager

In the heart of central London is a workplace specialist built with something different. While the historic Old Bailey Court and St. Paul's Cathedral are visible from their office windows, BW: Workplace Experts is a company that is boldly shaping the future of its sector.

Founded in 2000, BW: Workplace Experts specialises in office fit out and refurbishment. This means that while another company builds the walls of the building, BW and its team of preferred subcontractors develop and build the interior. This can include everything from lighting, stairs, ductwork, furniture, decorating, and more. Today, BW is a £200 million company made up of 200 innovative and collaborative professionals.

What sets BW apart is its commitment to completing projects that are "Defect Free" at practical completion, or "DF@PC" as they have coined it. This attention to detail in delivering exactly what the architects and client team envision is challenging, but one that has earned them business with blue chip brands and major public sector bodies.

AT A GLANCE

75%
Remote workforce

25-30
Number of projects
in-progress

6.7M+
Files

12 Year
Data retention policy



One of the main challenges of having files stored in 5 different places is that you start losing governance of files and it becomes impossible to manage, especially with a large team. When you have one centralized system you can ensure it's highly secure and the right people have the right access.

—Steve Buchanan | Head of IT

The Challenge

Over 75% of BW's employees work remotely on the project sites of the 25-30 projects typically in progress. All IT systems are therefore designed to support remote work from the get-go, not as an afterthought.

At the time Steve Buchanan began as Head of IT at BW in 2015, their storage infrastructure consisted of 19 on-premise servers which were both out of warranty and in need of replacement. Shortly prior to Buchanan's arrival, one of those file servers crashed, reinforcing his decision to prioritize moving BW's IT infrastructure to the cloud.

Buchanan led BW's systematic move of its IT infrastructure to the cloud. While the move solved a lot of problems such as reducing the burden on IT administration with on-premises hardware, it also created some new ones. A variety of cloud file services began being used across the business such as SharePoint, OneDrive, Dropbox, Egnyte, and local Windows File Servers. With files and content stored across all these applications and repositories, they began experiencing content sprawl, or "service sprawl" as Buchanan describes it.

Tom Hollingsworth, IT Manager, is acutely aware of the risk and challenges of content sprawl with a spotlight focused on this area as he took the business through ISO 27001 certification, the leading global information security standard which outlines the policies and controls that organizations put in place to manage risk and secure their data. Taking multiple systems through this audit, rather than just making sure one system is secure, makes achieving compliance more complex.

COMPANY

BW: Workplace Experts was founded in 2000 and specializes in office fit out and refurbishments. BW has a commitment to completing all projects without defect, or what they term DF@PC or Defect Free at practical completion. Today, BW is a £200 million company made up of 200 innovative individuals working with blue chip brands and major public sector bodies.

LOCATION

London, UK

INDUSTRY

- Construction

For me, the difference with Egnyte is one word: Support. Egnyte consistently responds to any issues we're having with a quick, pertinent, and accurate answer. To me that is priceless.

—Steve Buchanan | Head of IT

For these reasons, BW decided to consolidate onto a single cloud file system. Since they had achieved success with Microsoft SSO as part of their transition to the cloud, it seemed like the obvious choice to put all their eggs in one basket with a Microsoft product like SharePoint.

It was around this time that Covid-19 began disrupting business in the UK and around the globe. As employees began working remotely, bottlenecks occurred with BW's on-site file storage from designers working on large files, leading IT to accelerate the move to SharePoint.

They worked with a Microsoft partner to test SharePoint extensively, including sample transfers of data prior to moving over all of their files. However, 3-4 days after the data migration users began experiencing what Buchanan calls "fundamental errors," including incorrect versions of documents and syncing issues with OneDrive. These inconsistencies didn't occur during testing; it was only when all users and their production dataset were added that it became clear; this didn't scale.

After exhausting all internal and Microsoft partner resources to pinpoint the issue, they escalated it to Microsoft support. It was determined at that time that BW was being throttled due to the amount of data being transferred from SharePoint and there was no way around those throttles. Microsoft does not publish their throttling limits so BW was left only with the knowledge that they had breached their allotted amount of data transfers, and a certain amount of API calls per day. With graphic designers working regularly on files up to 1 GB for their clients, they quickly realized SharePoint was never going to work for them.



The Solution

Needing to chart a new course quickly that would work for their team, BW's IT team began working around the clock on a solution. "Where can we put our files that we know works? Everything pointed to Egnyte," said Hollingsworth.

Hollingsworth began working immediately with Egnyte's Customer Success and Professional Services team on a course of action. Upon recommendation, BW used Cloud FastPass to transfer the data themselves, expediting the migration from SharePoint to Egnyte.

They prioritized the larger files that were causing the issues with throttling in SharePoint. This included design files from the Creative Services team such as Adobe Creative Cloud files, and 3D design files such as Autodesk Revit and 3ds Max files, and video walkthroughs.

According to Buchanan, they could have a 4-minute fly-through of a building that is 3GB with multiple versions created during a single week. This volume, complexity and size of the data can be difficult to manage, but end users achieved the performance they needed with Egnyte in working on these large files.

BW is also able to reduce complexity for both users and IT administrators by keeping its 6.7M files and 20TB all in one location. With a SharePoint limit of 100,000 items per document library, this would have meant splitting up their files and incurring unnecessary efficiency impacts.

The Egnyte platform is more stable and works better than SharePoint. But, it's also Egnyte's support that has been excellent. We can always call someone from Egnyte and they are there to help if we need it.

—Steve Buchanan | Head of IT



The Results

In order for BW to deliver inspiring projects at the highest standards that their clients celebrate, they needed a technology partner built with the same goal in mind.

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Since consolidating its files onto Egnyte, BW has reduced IT complexity and risk by moving off of three different file storage and sharing solutions including SharePoint, Dropbox, and an on-premise Windows File Server. This has provided BW’s users with the performance they need to work productively from any location and enabled IT to control content sprawl across the business.

While the transition to Egnyte began with reliable performance for users, it has been sustained by a collaborative relationship between BW’s IT team and the Egnyte team.

BW has regular conversations with Egnyte’s Customer Success about best practices and the product roadmap, which is not something that happens with their other service providers.

“Egnyte has the enterprise backbone to back it up, but they also make us feel like we’re collaborating with a group of five people in a room. I think that provides the best of both worlds and aligns with how we are at BW as well. We’re completing large scale projects for blue chip companies, yet we still feel like a family. So, I think we’re aligned in that,” said Hollingsworth.

EGNYTE

In a content critical age, Egnyte fuels business growth by enabling content-rich business processes, while also providing organizations with visibility and control over their content assets. Egnyte’s cloud-native content services platform leverages the industry’s leading content intelligence engine to deliver a simple, secure, and vendor-neutral foundation for managing enterprise content across business applications and storage repositories. More than 16,000 companies trust Egnyte to enhance employee productivity, automate data management, and reduce file-sharing cost and complexity. Investors include Google Ventures, Kleiner Perkins, Caufield & Byers, and Goldman Sachs. For more information, visit www.egnyte.com