

San Francisco's Migration of 29,000 Employees to the Cloud is Under Way

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San Francisco has long been famous for the thick fog that at times shrouds the city. But within government circles, going forward it will also be known as the first major American municipality to upgrade to a consolidated cloud solution that, when complete, will have its 29,000 employees on a single network.

According to city and county CIO Marc Touitou, who also is director of the San Francisco Department of Technology, about 12,000 accounts so far have been migrated from the Microsoft Enterprise Cloud the city was using to Microsoft's Office 365 solution. He expects full migration to be complete by the end of June.

"Office 365 is more government compliant and puts the whole family [of city and county workers] on the same platform," said Touitou, who is leading the transition. "This will give all municipal workers the ability to more easily collaborate."

To allow San Francisco to place all employees on a single cloud platform, the city and county needed a solution that was compliant with the FBI's Criminal Justice Information

Services (CJIS) regulatory policy requirements. According to Microsoft officials, Office 365 meets CJIS guidelines, which means police, safety and health departments will now be on the same system as other city and county departments.

“When looking at the great cities across the nation, few if any public safety [departments] are unified under one cloud,” Touitou said. “Office 365 meets requirements of the [federal] justice department and CJIS, and allows us to move the police department and fire department on to the cloud.”

According to information from the U.S. Department of Justice, the premise of the CJIS Security Policy is to provide appropriate controls to protect the full lifecycle of criminal justice information (CJI). The policy provides guidance for the creation, viewing, modification, transmission, dissemination, storage and destruction of CJI.

The policy applies to every individual — contractor, private entity, noncriminal justice agency representative or member of a criminal justice entity — with access to, or who operate in support of, criminal justice services and information.

While having emergency services departments such as police and fire operating in the same cloud not only allows employees to be more efficient, but also shows the significant steps forward that San Francisco has made technologically in recent years.

“It was well-known that the SFPD in the 2011 time frame did not have email,” said Stuart McKee, chief technology officer of State and Local Government with Microsoft. “Now the police department will have a robust email infrastructure that that they can trust and meets all compliance issues.”

While any major migration of data has the potential for unforeseen issues, Touitou characterized the San Francisco migration from Enterprise to Office 365 as “very smooth and painless.”

“We were probably the first one to do such a migration,” he said. “When working with Microsoft, we told them we don’t have a year to complete this. We challenged the executives to simplify and accelerate the process. They built a specific path from the two cloud services to allow us to complete the migration.”

While the transition to Office 365 has gone well, Touitou said there is always calculated risk involved in choosing to undertake a project in a jurisdiction as large as San Francisco.

“There is no such thing as zero risk; had we failed, we could have rolled back to enterprise,” he said. “While I would have had a bruised ego, there would have been no disruption of service.”

Having all city employees on Office 365 will create greater efficiencies and allow municipal employees across all departments to more easily communicate and share information, Touitou explained.

“When everyone is on the same platform, they will all have instant messaging and the ability to audio and video conference,” he explained. “We will be behaving like we are part of one group versus being part of six or seven different groups.”

Microsoft's McKee added that Office 365's unified communication structure will allow all employees to easily locate co-workers in online directories to contact them when looking to get a quick answer to a question. Also, important documents can be easily share and protected through the system's digital rights management feature.

McKee also noted that Office 365 has various backup systems to prevent data from being lost as the result of an unforeseen event. " This is what (Microsoft) does for a living," he said. "We have multiple data centers and geographic redundancies built in to the system."

While departments across the city and county are expected to benefit from the efficiencies included in the Office 365 Cloud, Touitou feels the new system will have a significant positive impact on the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH).

Office 365 "will allow hospitals to communicate better and faster with the DPH," he said, "which is important, as there is a great deal of collaboration and efficiency needed to manage public health issues."

<http://www.govtech.com/computing/San-Franciscos-Migration-of-29000-Employees-to-the-Cloud-is-Under-Way.html>