WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems

Laundry Innovator Manages Growing Business Using Cloud BI and Collaboration Tools

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TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Microsoft Dynamics

A journey to the cloud

How WASH Laundry used the cloud to improve service and profits.

WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems, a leader in technology-advanced, eco-friendly laundry room services, is growing rapidly and using technology in novel ways to power that growth. It's using Microsoft Office 365 to analyze data from 500,000 washers and dryers and make fast, fact-based decisions on pricing and service. It's integrating acquisitions twice as fast and using social networking to maintain the company's culture. With flexible licensing, WASH is also saving money.

WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems is as an incredibly high-tech company in a traditionally low-tech industry. Its best-in-class facilities management services can be found at apartment properties, condos, college and university residence halls, military bases, and other multi-housing locations. More than 5 million people do their weekly laundry at a WASH facility.

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> John Buccola,
> Chief Information Officer

WASH has revolutionized coin-operated laundry through innovations such as smart card payment and web-based laundry monitoring. Its FIXLAUNDRY® app lets customers scan a barcode on a broken machine to request service. It uses sophisticated business intelligence (BI) software to optimize laundry load pricing and washing machine maintenance.

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How did a laundry business get so good at technology?

Master the Spin Cycle of Growth

A lot of it had to do with the company transitioning from family ownership to private equity ownership in 2008. The new owners wanted to expand internationally, but the company's older technology would not take the company forward.

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> Chris Hannum,
> Chief Operating Officer

Management brought in John Buccola as Chief Information Officer to help with the business transformation. He outfitted the company with technology that could accommodate a rising tide of data, keep management in touch with the fast-moving business, and help maintain a family-owned feeling.

Buccola moved to cloud computing services wherever possible, to minimize infrastructure investments and maximize access to innovation. He also decided to standardize on Microsoft software to gain access to a broad range of datacenter and desktop software and also cloud technology.

"We were blown away by the depth and breadth of the Microsoft portfolio and the rate and scale of its investments," Buccola says. "We were already using Microsoft software, but we had no idea what was going on in the Microsoft cloud." What was going on was a rapidly growing library of services to handle everything from word processing to advanced data analytics, all delivered on a pay-as-you-go basis to any device, anytime, anywhere.

WASH moved the data processing piece of its FIXLAUNDRY application to Microsoft Azure, which provides subscription-based datacenter services. That worked out so well that WASH decided to move end-user computing services to the cloud, too. It selected Microsoft Office 365 so that all employees could take advantage of modern productivity, communication, and collaboration tools. Technology advisor Prosum Technology Services assisted with moving employees to Office 365.

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"We looked at Google for Business, but Microsoft is light years ahead of Google in everything from shared calendars to business reporting," Buccola says. "We didn't see the full-fidelity analytics and reporting you get with Microsoft Excel and Microsoft BI."

Glean Instant Business Insights from Machines in 70,000 Locations

One of the most impactful capabilities that WASH gained with Office 365 is Power BI, a cloud-powered version of the analytics functionality that employees already use with Excel. With BI in the cloud, WASH employees access powerful business analytics anytime from any device, and share and discuss insights with colleagues by posting query results in the cloud. Microsoft Partner and solutions provider SADA Systems helped WASH implement Power BI and deploy its SharePoint Online collaboration environment.

Suppose a financial manager notices that parts expenses were higher than normal one month. Was it because a certain class of machines began to wear out? Were certain technicians replacing parts more frequently? In minutes, the manager uses Power BI to penetrate heaps of unintelligible data and zero in on the cause: a key supplier raised prices.

"In the past, our financial manager would have had to extract data, send it to the IT department, and wait weeks for a custom report," says Allan Villegas, Chief Financial Officer at WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems. "The beauty of Power BI is that employees are creating reports themselves without involving the IT team and sharing those reports with colleagues. This is extremely powerful for us."

Grow Quickly, Keep the Family Feeling

WASH uses Microsoft Dynamics GP financial software to run its business. With this powerful software, WASH can integrate employees that have joined through acquisition into its business faster. And by giving new employees Office 365 the day that they join the WASH family, WASH avoids the lengthy process of installing multiple software programs on multiple employee devices and helps new employees be productive sooner.

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Chris Hannum, Chief Operating Officer at WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems, has overseen several acquisition integrations for the company. "By using a unified suite of Microsoft software in our datacenter and in the cloud, we've cut our acquisition systems integration time in half,"

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Hannum says. "When you're growing as fast as we are, this is incredibly valuable so acquisitions can contribute to the business sooner."

WASH maintains a family feeling in the face of rapid growth by using video conferencing, instant messaging, and social networking. "Everyone's using Yammer to share stories about how they fixed a problem in the field, send welcomes to new employees in a new office, and post how-to videos," says Cathy Jackson, Vice President of Marketing for WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems. "The use of Yammer makes a great culture even greater and helps us bond as a team, which is important when the company is growing so fast."

Enjoy Flexible Pricing, Rapid ROI

Just as amazing as the wealth of capabilities that WASH gained is what it spent to get them. "Even with all the new capabilities we got, we're saving money," Villegas says. Adam Coffey, President and Chief Executive Officer for WASH Multifamily Laundry Systems, agrees. "We are seeing ROI on our Microsoft investments of less than 12 months, especially for Office 365," Coffey says. "Our margins and service levels are best in class, and our technology is a significant contributor to that."

Sweetening the deal further is the fact that WASH can license the exact Office 365 package that it needs for each job role.

As WASH washers and dryers continue to sprout around the world, the company is ready: to analyze a torrent of data coming in from millions of machines, to keep a growing employee base knit tightly together, and to differentiate itself with even more amazing laundry management features.

"We've never been as excited about our business as we are today," Buccola says. "I'm thrilled at how far we've come but even more excited about the future. With Office 365, we have infinite possibilities for excelling."

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A Closer Look at WASH Connected Systems

WASH uses flexible Office 365 licensing to get the exact package that it needs for each job role. The mobile workforce, including service technicians and installers, use Microsoft Exchange Online email and calendaring, Yammer social networking, and consume content on Microsoft SharePoint Online collaboration sites.

In WASH branch offices, employees also contribute content on SharePoint sites and collaborate anytime using Microsoft Lync Online for audio and video conferencing, presence, and screen sharing. And corporate users take advantage of Office 365 ProPlus on up to five home and work devices, get powerful Power BI features, and extra-large email mailboxes.

All employees use Microsoft Office Online to gain web-based access to Office applications from any device. And WASH migrated employee file storage to OneDrive for Business, which provides a terabyte of storage in the cloud per employee. Employees easily access their files from their mobile devices and home PCs in a highly secure, auditable, always-available fashion. By using OneDrive and SharePoint Online, increasingly distributed teams collaborate easily and in real time.

WASH uses Microsoft Dynamics CRM to manage its customers and Microsoft Dynamics GP as its core financial software (which feeds data to Power BI). The company is using a growing number of Microsoft Azure services, from Azure Virtual Machines to Storage, and soon Machine Learning. And it is creating a Microsoft-based private cloud environment in-house that will connect to Azure datacenters for disaster recovery and give the business instant datacenter scalability in the cloud.

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