

## CASE STUDY



# Guinness World Records

## Exponential-e migrate Guinness World Records' global workforce to Microsoft Office 365

### Overview

No longer just the publisher of a world famous book, today Guinness World Records (GWR) is a multimedia brand agency with offices across the globe. To facilitate its continual growth and diversification, GWR is embracing digitisation by moving to the cloud, starting with enlisting Exponential-e to migrate its global workforce to Microsoft Office 365.

### Challenges

- To facilitate flexible and remote working between a geographically dispersed workforce
- To give GWR's IT team the agility and freedom to adopt a proactive role in driving the business's technological agenda

### Solution

- Migration of global workforce from on premise Microsoft Exchange to Microsoft Office 365 (including OneDrive storage)

### Business benefits

- Workforce empowered to work flexibly and collaborate across geographic distances
- GWR's IT department freed to take on proactive role within business







## Guinness World Records

For over 62 years, Guinness World Records (GWR) has produced *The Guinness Book of World Records*, a book that documents record-breaking achievements and that itself holds a record: having sold 141 million copies, it's the best-selling copyrighted book of all time. In spite of these gargantuan sales figures and a globe-spanning reputation, the book has been and continues to be pulled together by a relatively small (but geographically dispersed) in-house team.

As a company, however, GWR has been expanding. Today, GWR is no longer only a book publisher – it is a multimedia brand agency with key presence across Digital, Events and Business Solutions. Working with leading brands and businesses, GWR delivers bespoke marketing campaigns, using record-breaking events to create inspirational, highly shareable content.

### The challenge: “We cannot be confined by old ways of working...”

The rapid growth and diversification of GWR as a business over the past five years has required a radical rethinking of its technology requirements. Under the guidance of **Rob Howe, IT Director** at GWR for six years, the company has pursued a strategy of digitisation, encompassing infrastructure, service delivery and security.

This strategy is underpinned by an overhauling of GWR's internal setup from an infrastructure and applications perspective. GWR's IT department has embraced the cloud, recognising that this supports the business's push to become more flexible, agile and dynamic in order to cope with the demands of a growing business.

Rob Howe explains:

*“It is the IT department's job to make sure we can respond to the ever-growing changes within our business model, so we can take up new opportunities and move into new markets. Going forward, cloud gives us far more flexibility to grow, rather than being constrained, and that's always my focus – that we have more options than less.”*

GWR is a truly global company; in the last six years the company's corporate footprint has doubled from three offices to six, with sites in London, Miami, New York, Dubai, Beijing and Tokyo, with additional remote workers placed at over 15 locations.



*“As an organisation, we need to ensure that we’re nimble enough to answer the call of a potential record-breaking event – whether it’s in London or Papua New Guinea”, says Howe. “We absolutely cannot be confined by old ways of working.”*

## A ‘peace of mind’ partnership

To kick off its Cloud migration, GWR enlisted Exponential-e to migrate 200 of its employees from the existing on-premises Exchange to Office 365. Rob Howe knew that Microsoft’s cloud-based business productivity suite would help overcome the challenges to collaboration posed by the company’s geographic spread, enabling its workforce to collaborate to deliver engaging experiences and capitalise on market opportunities across the globe.

He also knew that Exponential-e would be the perfect partner to see GWR through this crucial first phase towards digitisation. Exponential-e had been providing critical communications services to GWR - from private connectivity between UK datacentres and GWR’s Beijing office to 10Gbps connectivity and hosted telephony – for close to five years.

The mutual trust and understanding that this work had built between GWR and Exponential-e laid the groundwork for a remarkably speedy and successful Office 365 transition.

As Howe comments:

*“Our previous experience with Exponential-e gave me peace of mind. I know that they do what they say they will.”*

## Laying the foundations for a “painless” project

Planning for the project began in July 2017. By September, work had started, with the core migration completed, as planned, in November. In order to complete a complex migration in less than three months, Exponential-e’s team had to ensure the process would go off without a hitch.

And, in fact, it did: looking back on the process, Rob Howe describes the migration as “painless”. In his view, this painlessness of execution was due largely to Exponential-e’s meticulous planning.

*“They are really good at going through things in detail and making sure they understand the business and key dates, rather than just the technology,” says Howe.*

Crucially, flexibility was built into the project design from day one, allowing for any delays that might arise in the course of migration. “We made sure there were enough discrete chunks of work built-in that we could chop and change if we needed to,” says Howe. “By following this agile methodology, we were able to move tasks around without affecting the overall project.”

The involvement of GWR’s hosting provider as a third party in the project complicated matters. The success of the migration therefore depended upon (in Howe’s words) a “three-way approach”. The key to such relationships is communication. “Exponential-e excelled at communicating throughout the transition,” says Howe. “As a result, both we and our hosting provider were constantly reassured.”



## Delivering the flexibility a global company needs

GWR is already seeing the benefits of migrating to Office 365. Its global workforce is now able to work more closely together, despite often being great distances - even continents - apart.

As Howe says: “Teams can now access SharePoint and video from anywhere, which is important for frequent travellers and remote workers”. In other words, they are now empowered to work as flexibly as the nature of GWR’s business requires them to.

An example of how flexibility has been improved by the project is provided by Microsoft’s cloud-based storage device OneDrive, which has been rolled out as part of the migration process. “People are finding it far more useful to use OneDrive, especially when they are in remote territories”, says Howe, “because it gives them far better speeds, rather than trying to connect to a datacentre in Heathrow for shared files, for example.”

Office 365 is also playing a crucial part in enabling GWR’ IT department to transform its business function. It is proving extremely effective in helping the department to execute its strategic goal of supporting flexibility and mobility. Again, OneDrive provides a striking example to illustrate this, eliminating the need to move user files between machines, and greatly reducing the time it takes for the IT department to roll out PCs and devices to staff. Howe: “We’ve gone from rolling out one machine in a day and a half to rolling out two a day, which is a big improvement.”

## A key milestone on the path to the future

It’s improvements like this that are freeing GWR’s IT department up to play a more proactive role in the wider business.

And this, as Howe explains, is in turn helping GWR as a whole to move forward with its technology agenda and expand as a business:

*“The Office 365 project has allowed our department to take a big step forward in becoming more flexible and responsive – and less reactive - to the business. It’s allowing us to get out in front, which is key, especially as we continue to expand and diversify as a business and add new services.”*

The “painless” success of this project, GWR’s first major foray into cloud, has been crucial in giving Rob Howe and his colleagues the confidence to continue heading in the direction of digitisation. “Going forward, every year there will be something new we’re looking to expand into,” he says, “so this was a key first step, and if it hadn’t gone smoothly it would have made everything else far more challenging.”

So what’s the next step? GWR is now considering overhauling its telephony system, which is currently split into a number of office-specific systems.

*“The plan would be to move all of the telephony systems into a cloud solution, where it can be brought closer to Office 365” says Howe. “By linking everything together we would aim to achieve unified communication.”*

It can be easily seen how essential a part of this process Office 365 is, and how essential a component in GWR’s continuing transition into the cloud it will be. The migration has been, as Howe himself says, as “a key milestone in GWR’s ongoing digital transformation”, a transformation that will ultimately make it easier for GWR to deliver ‘moments of sheer amazement and wonder’ from global locations to a global audience.



## About Exponential-e

Innovation is at the core of Exponential-e, and has been since our inception in 2002. We wholly own our super-fast Network, and our fusion of complementary technologies - a carrier-class Network and Cloud infrastructure - means we can deliver enterprise applications at wire speed for a superior end-user experience. We deliver scalable, dynamic and bespoke solutions. Renowned for our responsiveness, coupled with our customer centric approach, and a UK based 24 / 7 x 365 service desk, means we offer unrivalled expertise.



**Exponential-e Ltd**  
100 Leman Street, London E1 8EU



Telephone  
**+44 (0) 20 7096 4096**



Visit the website  
[www.exponential-e.com](http://www.exponential-e.com)