

A global organization drives synergy by merging Microsoft 365 and Active Directory



Country: **Japan Tobacco International (JTI)**

Employees: **46,000**

Industry: **Tobacco**

Website: www.jti.com

For over 20 years, Japan Tobacco International, as part of the JT Group, operated its International and Japanese-domestic tobacco businesses with separate IT teams and in two IT environments: Directory domains and Microsoft 365 tenants. With help from Quest migration software solutions, Quest Professional Services and the Quest Migration-as-a-Service team, the company was able to streamline business operations by merging two IT environments into one by consolidating Microsoft 365 and Active Directory.

JTI is a leading global tobacco company. It employs approximately 46,000 people around the world and sells its products in over 130 markets. Its portfolio includes widely-recognized tobacco and cigarette brands such as Winston, Camel, Mevius and LD, as well as a range of Reduced-Risk Products (RRP)

Challenges

JTI is a subsidiary of JT Inc, a leading international tobacco and vaping company, with global headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. In 2020, the company's IT department faced a formidable challenge – a tenant-to-tenant migration project that needed to combine two separate IT environments into one by merging 17,000 end users in Japan into a single global environment spanning multiple languages and time zones across APAC, EMEA, and North America — all without adversely affecting end user access and productivity.

Solution

JTI deployed Quest Migration Solutions to ensure a smooth and efficient migration process. In addition, after assessing the complexity of the migration project, JTI also chose to utilize Quest Professional Services and Migration-as-a-Service (MaaS). The global team was well coordinated and helped JTI successfully execute the migration, with handoffs for every event, all communicated in real time through internal Microsoft Teams chats.

Results or Benefits

- Increased collaboration and synergy between the domestic and international sides of business
- Heightened security posture due to maintaining one centralized IT environment
- Improved standards compliance across the organization
- Creation of a foundation for streamlined optimization in the future
- Lower operating costs by decommissioning the Microsoft 365 source tenant

– non-combustible technologies like vaping and other alternative nicotine products. The Japanese domestic tobacco business, based in Tokyo, operates five factories and multiple distribution points across Japan, whereas JTI, the JT Group's international subsidiary, is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and has a span of over 70 countries, with 38 finished goods and tobacco related factories as well as 8 research and development centres.

The growth of JTI over the years has been a key contributor for the mass regional diversity. JTI itself was formed as the result of the 1999 acquisition by the JT Group of all the non-US operations of R. J. Reynolds and its global presence has been strengthened over the years by further mergers and acquisitions.

Merging two IT environments into one.

The international and Japanese-domestic tobacco businesses operated independently for over 20 years, with separate IT infrastructures, separate IT teams and separate reporting lines. “As we started to transition our services to the cloud, we did it in parallel,” says Constantine Sulema, Identity and Collaboration Solutions Architecture Lead for JTI. “So JTI would have created its own Microsoft 365 tenant, and JT would have created its own Microsoft 365 tenant.”

Although the two IT infrastructures had points of interconnection, true interconnectivity across the enterprise was limited. “We would have the IT organization in JTI with its own structure and reporting line, and an IT organization in JT with its own structure and reporting line,” explains Sulema. “There was strategic governance from the top, but operationally, these two organizations were pretty much independent.”

As JT Group looked at creating a totally new operating model, one that would further consolidate the International and Japanese-domestic tobacco businesses, the key requirement was to facilitate collaboration. “When we started to look at options, we realized that JTI had a bigger, more complex environment, with a larger number of business applications, and a much larger geography,” Sulema

says. “After analyzing all these factors, we came to the conclusion that the best way to integrate the environment would be on the JTI platform.”

Complexity of the environment required migrating users in batches over 12 months.

The company had two simultaneous goals: to merge two IT environments into one, as well as migrate user workstations. In addition, the company wanted to consolidate its Active Directory by merging two on-premises AD domains into one. Because of the unique challenges facing the migration project, JTI found it preferable to take a phased approach, migrating users in batches over 12 months.

Why? In a large complex environment with numerous interdependencies, it would be virtually impossible to migrate all 17,000 user accounts – as well as business applications and other resources such as Teams, SharePoint, Power Platform, etc. – all at once. To make it happen, JTI had to migrate users in batches. “Cross-premises access, or cross-tenant access, was a pretty big challenge actually,” Sulema explains.

Because of all the dependencies between the two environments, JTI found that using Microsoft-provided integration and migration tools simply wouldn't work for a project of this scale. “With that in mind, we started to look around for a toolset that would allow us to facilitate this migration. But because of the unique circumstances, an out-of-the-box configuration was not likely to solve all the challenges. Customization was needed.”

Need for professional services and Migration-as-a-Service.

JTI's need for a customized solution is one of the reasons the company turned to Quest and the Quest Professional Services team. “I must say we had great support from the consultancy team, who did a great job helping us to build a configuration that would address our requirements,” Sulema explains. “I mentioned the complexity of migrating multiple workloads at the same time, and we spent most of our time building the configuration that would allow us to overcome the challenges of this complexity.”

The Quest Professional Services group worked with JTI to configure a solution comprised of Quest tools such as Quest Migrator Pro for Active Directory, Quest On Demand Migration for mailboxes and Teams, and Quest On Demand Migration for OneDrive. In addition to Quest solutions, the migration project also implemented the use of some Microsoft-provided tools, as well as third party tools to migrate some very specific workloads.

The design process took approximately seven months. The team then spent the next six months testing and validating the solution until it was working without issues. Three months before the migration, the company piloted the process, migrating small batches before starting the mass migration.

As with any large-scale migration, there were small pitfalls along the way. “For example, you may have some issues with the migration process because of a specific configuration of a workstation, and the process would not complete successfully,” Sulema says. “And then you need to either roll back or find a way to complete the migration and fix the issue. Of course, we had the whole [Quest] support organization behind us, helping us to deal with any post-migration incidents.”

Combining our internal team with the Migration-as-a-Service team gave us sufficient expertise and resources to cover this lengthy, complex process.

Constantine Sulema, Identity and Collaboration Solutions, Architecture Lead for JTI

It was during this time that JTI decided to use Quest Migration-as-a-Service (MaaS) rather than perform the migration in house. One of the reasons for using Migration-as-a-Service instead of relying solely on in-house teams, was to have a team with relevant migration experience. In addition, JTI needed to have resources that would be available in different

time zones. “If you look at the time zones, it would be much more complicated to do it with an internal team,” Sulema adds. “Combining our internal team with the Migration-as-a-Service team gave us the expertise and resources sufficient to cover this lengthy, complex process.”

The Migration-as-a-Service (MaaS) was executed by a well-coordinated, globally-managed services team that successfully executed the migration, with handoffs for every step. All communication was communicated in real time through internal Microsoft Teams chats.

Optimized, streamlined IT operations create more synergy between teams.

The whole migration project, from design to execution, stretched for over 30 months. “It was a very large project, in terms of the volume of work and impact, but it was certainly worthwhile,” Sulema adds. “Now we can operate and collaborate much more smoothly, and we’ve built a foundation for further integration of business applications and optimization of the environment.”

One of the key metrics to determine the success of the migration project was completeness. “We would track migration of all the resources, user accounts and workstations and make sure that we’ve migrated everything,” Sulema explains. “Once we completed the migration, we were able to effectively decommission the Microsoft 365 source tenant.”

Not only was the JTI IT team happy with the outcome of the migration project, so were the end users. “The [end user] feedback was very positive, even though the process wasn’t completely seamless,” Sulema explains. “Of course, we had challenges, especially at the beginning.”

But post migration feedback from end users indicated that at a business level, the interaction between the Japanese domestic and the international sides of the business has improved dramatically. “Now we work in one single common global environment that allows us to integrate business processes and applications, improve our security posture and compliance with standards across the organization.”

Lessons learned

One of the things Sulema and his team learned is that the more fragmented the environment, the more the company has to face complexity and risk. But now, JTI has a global environment that supports the business and that the IT team can maintain more easily while ensuring sufficient levels of security. “We are more capable to ensure that security standards and policies are applied in a consistent way across the whole environment,” Sulema says.

“Although the migration has reduced the cost of maintaining two separate IT environments, the migration project itself was not a cost-driven exercise,” Sulema says. “Rather it was an effort to optimize and streamline business applications and create more synergy between teams. The overall aim of this project was to drive collaboration and improve our ability to integrate the domestic and international tobacco businesses,” he adds. “And from what we hear from our business partners, we have successfully completed that.”

But in more personal terms, Sulema also appreciates the growing reputation that the IT team has earned from company leadership throughout this migration project. “Of course, any successful project is something you should be very proud of...but it’s doubly rewarding if you improve relationships with our business colleagues at the same time,” Sulema concludes. “And this was indeed a very good example where we have delivered what was expected, and more.”

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Constantine Sulema, Identity and Collaboration Solutions, Architecture Lead for JTI

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