



Nelson Tasman Hospice says iCare with BlueBerryIT and Microsoft.



Steve Hussey Photography

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Every day, Nelson Tasman Hospice’s 90 staff provide specialist care and support for end of life patients and their families – in their homes, aged care facilities and at an inpatient unit.

The Hospice provides palliative medical care to around 230 patients at any time, it also offers a range of services including counselling, bereavement support and chaplain services, covering a population base of around 102,000 across the top of the Nelson Tasman region.

The organisation receives just 52% of its funding from government, and relies on fundraising, donations, bequests and community support – including 550 volunteers – to provide its services.

“Like everyone in healthcare, there’s not enough money to go around, so we need to look at how we can do things smarter,” says Frans Dellebeke, Nelson Tasman Hospice CEO.

When Nelson Tasman Hospice and Top of the South IT provider BlueBerryIT first began working together in 2009, the Hospice was running a 10 year old server using terminal services and ageing thin clients to deliver controlled access to a limited number of applications and services. The decision was made to start leveraging Microsoft’s then fledgling cloud offerings, moving Exchange to the cloud with a long-term plan to move the entire system to the cloud.

A collaborative mobile care team



A move to a purpose-built Hospice facility in May 2019 provided the 30-year-old Hospice service with the perfect opportunity to fully embrace cloud capability.

Dellebeke says technology is increasingly important for the Hospice, enabling it to work smarter, without requiring additional resources.

For the hospice, doing things smarter includes mobility to enable staff to access and enter information at the patient's bedside – resulting in greater flexibility and improved communication and collaboration both within the Hospice, with patients and other health providers.

“We need to make sure everything we do is integrated, not just within the Hospice itself but with systems at our GPs, the District Health Board and Nelson Hospital, so we can all talk the same language, using the same platform.”

“That’s the Nirvana. We’re not there yet, but in our strategic planning we’re talking with others about where we want to go and how it fits in with what they’re doing,” says Dellebeke.



Sharing and Caring with SharePoint

BlueBerryIT introduced the Hospice to Microsoft’s SharePoint platform, using the on-premise based offering as the foundation for the organisation’s file storage for a number of years and enabling the organisations’ team – who have widely differing technology skills – to adjust to the platform.

The antiquated server provided a push to move fully to cloud. The Hospice considered replacing it or adopting a hybrid system and going partially to cloud, but Jen Sims, Nelson Tasman Hospice IT co-ordinator, says, with the guidance of BlueBerryIT, the decision was made to bite the bullet and go fully into the cloud.

“We were moving to our new facility, so it was the right time to do it with the move,” Sims says.

“A few years ago our patient management systems were paper based. We then went for an online, web-based patient management system. Along with that has come the desire to make our care team more mobile,” she says.

The SharePoint platform, as part of Office 365, ticked the box for the Hospice with its versatility, redundancy, remote access and ability to consolidate data and files, while also providing a collaborative environment, but there was also another factor in its favour: Microsoft’s Donations Programme which has a licensing model designed to help Not For Profits save money while enabling them to concentrate on their core business rather than paying high licensing fees.

The Hospice has been introducing tablets to its community team, so the shift to Office 365 ‘became a no brainer because it enabled our staff to work on the move’, Sims says.

“A lot of it revolved around the mobility side of things. It’s also getting to the stage where we’re wanting to start looking at perhaps getting tablets out to rural patients so they can come in on meetings with doctors, nurses and specialists,” she says.

That, says Dellebeke, is a good example of working smarter. With a catchment area that covers a large part of the top of the South Island, tablets hold the potential for cutting the often long travel times for nurses visiting patients, while also providing patients with easier, faster access to medical staff in times of need.

The experience within iCare has been customised for each user group, with 10 individual iCare portals providing access to the most relevant information, including rosters, Hospice news and calendars based on departments. Rooms and cars can be booked via iCare sites, which also host a number of blogs along with all of the Hospice’s policies, procedures, forms and templates, and document libraries. A staff hub, where staff can organise social events, share recipes and chat informally, helps strengthen the family vibe for the hospice.



The customisation enables less confident users to easily access information they require from the portal, while still enabling more IT savvy users to dig deeper into SharePoint as needed.

Working in partnership with Nelson Tasman Hospice, BlueBerryIT built a new information platform, iCare, on SharePoint Online, transferring 20 years of data and files to the new environment.

“While we want to hold the hands of staff, we also want to empower them and give them the ability to use the system as it’s meant to be used,” Phill Urquhart, BlueBerry IT Solutioneer, says.



Smooth transitions

At the same time as the Hospice moved to a pure cloud environment, they also replaced 80% of their fleet with new HP devices, a combination laptops, tablets and mini desktops. Having all devices running the most current software has ensured easy collaboration within the Office 365 environment.

“The SharePoint and OneDrive integration through the Microsoft Office application has really enabled us to get all the Hospice users across into the new environment in a more comfortable way,” Urquhart says.

A combination of Office 365 tools and OneDrive’s desktop, documents and pictures syncing facility and SharePoint, was used to create a roaming profile environment, enabling users to log in from any machine and see their desktop and documents.

“The files on demand system built into the OneDrive sync tool means we don’t have replication of data, or data living on machines filling up hard drives,” Urquhart says. “That gives the staff the ability to easily move around the organisation.”



Improving team collaboration and communication

The Hospice is also beginning to embrace Teams – Microsoft’s Unified Communications platform within Office 365 which combines chat, video meetings, file storage and application integration.

“Teams has come upon us a little earlier than we anticipated,” notes Sims. “We have a couple of staff members who have got very enthusiastic with it and its really taken off.”

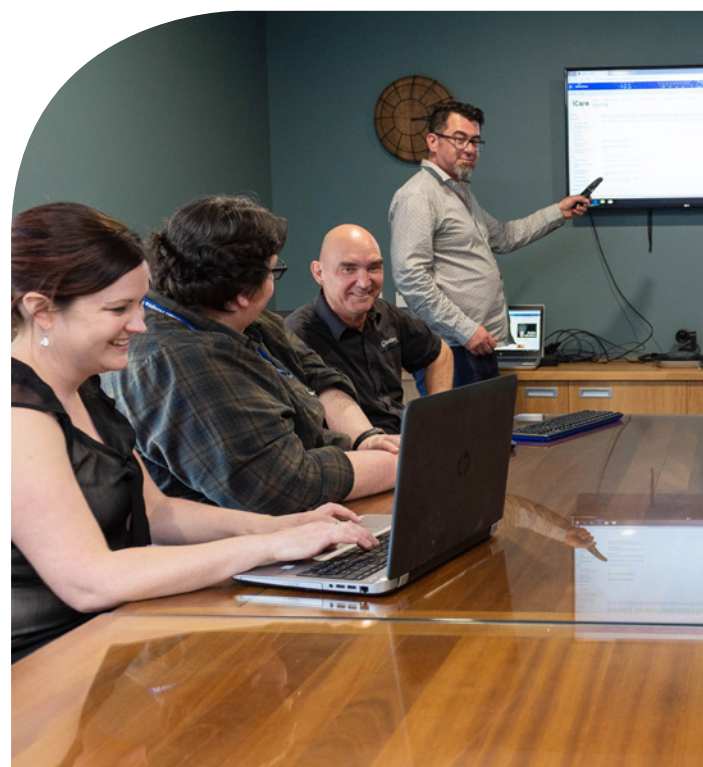
“The main advantage, particularly for the Hospice, is that Teams combines a lot of different tools, from chat to video meetings and file sharing, into a single software suite makes those tools more accessible, and gives them a real world example of how they can be used in a collaborative environment,” Urquhart says.

“They’re really seeing benefits from using these tools and by going further into the Teams apps offerings they’re able to discover parts of the system themselves – such as the Planner product – which can provide even more benefits.

Urquhart notes that Planner, rolled out within Teams, is a big hook for many clients who don’t have the need, or knowledge, to utilise the Microsoft Projects suite, but need something with more depth than Outlook Calendar.

“Planner gives you integration across users and resources, Outlook calendars and the full product suite,” Urquhart says.

“It’s not just collaboration between people, it’s collaboration between the tools we use as well that is so important.”





Funding professionalism

It's not just internal communication and collaboration that has been bolstered.

Hudson Dodd, Nelson Tasman Hospice Fundraising and Marketing Manager, says the new system is enabling the organisation to more strongly engage with others on a commercial basis.

"We create a lot of promotional materials and engage in different campaigns with a wide variety of businesses and organisations and it can be a challenge to manage the brand and do quality assurance that everyone is using our logo properly and doing everything within our brand guidelines," he says.

"The charity sector relies on people's goodwill to support a cause, and any organisation asking for support through fundraising needs to be 'commercial ready' - to be able to interface with the commercial sector on a professional basis that instils confidence and provides efficiency in terms of getting initiatives up and running and being able to deliver on what we say we will."

Dodd says the Hospice can now provide simple SharePoint links to external parties to ensure correct versions of logos and brand guidelines are in use.

"Another critical component is good information storage so we have clear records of correspondence and engagement we've had with individuals and families."

Good document templates and records are crucial in ensuring those who have made donations or bequests are recognised and followed up in an appropriate way.

Improving communications and sharing of documents was a key consideration in the move to SharePoint, Sims says.

"Like a lot of organisations in the good old days we had situations with various staff members working on the same documents and ending up with multiple versions."

Versioning within SharePoint has alleviated that issue, providing a single one point of truth, with staff able to all work on the same document.

"It's allowing us to communicate more effectively in regards to document control."

Smarter education options are also on the cards for the Hospice, which provides education services to health professionals throughout the region.

Sims says rather than packing up a vehicle to take out on the road the Hospice is looking at videoing educational sessions and sharing them via SharePoint, utilising Microsoft's Sway presentation.

Disaster recovery and security has also been bolstered. Urquhart notes that while running a hybrid environment it was a challenge to secure everything, despite running firewalls, antivirus and a range of other security precautions.

"There were vulnerabilities there with the hybrid environment with local file storage through Small Business Server 2011 that simply aren't there in the cloud environment."



Dynamic and fluid for a changing business world

"We have a process of re-consultation every few months to see whether we need to change things as the business' needs change and different departments merge, change and shift," he says.

"It's an interesting time in business everywhere in that departmental infrastructure is more fluid now than it has ever been. That applies for a lot of our clients, and we're seeing that fluidity and versatility affect how companies want to use their IT systems, so it's really important that IT systems are able to change with the clients needs."

The new solution provides the agility and flexibility needed in this day and age.

– URQUHART

The BlueBerryIT difference

Dellebeke says BlueBerryIT have gone 'above and beyond' with their service, providing training sessions and assisting staff with understanding other software applications outside of their contracted work.

"They've always been a great supporter of our hospice and gone over and above what was expected of them. Without them we certainly wouldn't be where we are at the moment."

Urquhart sums it up neatly:

"We consider the businesses we work with to be business partners, not clients. If they do better, we do better. We're not here to make profits off our clients, we're here to make our partners profitable, so anything we can provide them to help achieve that goal is in everyone's best interests."

