National Aquarium Dives Deep with Microsoft and Enabling Technologies

Skype Connects Staff Across the Campus

Among the first solutions Enabling deployed for the Aquarium was Lync (now Skype). "We use Skype for Business to allow our teams to quickly communicate across multiple facilities," said CTO Sam Tawiah. "Most visitors see the Aquarium on Piers 3 and 4, but it's actually a campus. Without good, solid technology, we would have trouble communicating. Skype really helps when a team in Pier 3 can quickly find and communicate with someone in marketing at headquarters, or at our Animal Care Center across town."

Enabling has managed multiple deployments, upgrades, and migrations. "Enabling runs projects very, very efficiently and makes us comfortable," said Tawiah. "We have a small team, who needs to do things very efficiently. When Enabling does the heavy lifting, it frees our team to help internal customers and handle pressing needs of the business." Enabling also supports Tawiah's team if there are issues. "We have been operating with Enabling as a support arm and call when needed, which is very comforting.

Using Skype allows the Aquarium to save significantly in recurring expenses. When switching telecom providers and moving from PRI to SIP, "We realized phenomenal hard cost savings on our phone bill," said Tawiah. **"Roughly $30,000 in real money can now be spent in other ways each year. Thanks to Enabling, the transition was a seamless experience."**

Introduction

The 1.3 million people who visit the National Aquarium in Baltimore each year are captivated by its award-winning habitats and the more than 20,000 animals that live in them. Behind the scenes, CTO Sam Tawiah's IT team creates an environment of security, collaboration, and process improvement for Aquarium staff.

Using Microsoft solutions in partnership with Enabling Technologies, the Aquarium provides secure access to information, Office 365, and collaboration tools. "Enabling has been very trustworthy," said Tawiah. "We count on their counsel, and their ability to fill gaps for us."

NATIONAL AQUARIUM

Inner Harbor, Baltimore, MD

https://aqua.org/

CTO: Sam Tawiah
Director: Les Kidwell

Extending Secure Identity Management to the Cloud

Tawiah sees cloud services as an optimal way to scale. "I view cloud technology as my way to scale without spending on infrastructure," he said. Enabling Tech set up Office 365 and Azure Active Directory, and the Aquarium uses several third-party SaaS applications.

Enabling Single Sign On to the cloud was an early initiative to improve security and management. "Using Azure Active Directory, users now have Single Sign On to Salesforce, Ultipro, and Intacct," explained Tawiah. "Users log in from the Microsoft Office portal, so it's very seamless. Users know if I need to get to these apps, I go to one place. That's hard to quantify but provides real value."

Les Kidwell, Director of Technology Solutions, agreed, saying "With our seasonal staffing needs, our deployment of Single Sign On was a big win. It enabled us to reduce password resets and lockouts that plagued our HR and IT teams. **The reduction in time spent and aggravation is immeasurable.**"

Tawiah relies on Enabling for new cloud security initiatives. "The SSO project is not something I would've entertained doing on our own," he said. "You want to work with a provider that has been there before. Using Enabling made that seamless, and we knew they would meet their commitment when done."

> **"We count on Enabling to feed us with what is coming from Microsoft and trends in the productivity and security industry."**
>
> **Sam Tawiah, CTO**

Secure Everything: The New Normal

Since its opening in 1981, the National Aquarium has consistently ranked as one of the nation's top three aquariums. Such lofty recognition requires the organization to put a premium on protecting the data of its customers and employees. "One of the main goals I've set for next year, and an area that's wildly important, is security, and improvement of our Office 365 Secure Score," said Tawiah. "We're also looking to reduce the risk of phishing through Enabling's Phish Hunter solution."

"Selling security to management has been easy," stated Tawiah, "because they hear news of all these breaches. The leadership team has embraced new behaviors like Multifactor Authentication (MFA)." The Aquarium uses MFA for IT already and will enforce conditional MFA to prompt users with a second factor only when off-campus.

Keeping Current on Trends and User Adoption

How does Tawiah's staff stay so current? "It is all a function of finding a provider who is engaged, and close to the Microsoft community. We couldn't keep up with all of this and do our day jobs." Tawiah attends Enabling's annual conference every year, and his team is active on a variety of topics with Enabling.

One of Tawiah's big takeaways is his mindset about change management and user adoption. **"Because of Enabling's preaching, we've adopted and forced ourselves to implement user awareness and change management principles."** In an organization credited with educating approximately 150,000 students each year, the IT team is constantly engaged and educating the staff about the Aquarium's multiple cloud deployments to ensure users are getting value. "I picked up little tricks at Enabling's conference and we're using it in practice. By managing user change in our environment, we've learned and adapted."

At one of Maryland's largest paid tourist attractions, success breeds success. Tawiah said, "I hear this all the time, like when we first rolled out SSO for the first application, users said, 'Wow, I like that!' and started demanding more. **That's when you know you've made an impact!**"

Trust Technology, but Verify Value

With all the Aquarium's success, Tawiah offers this advice: "Don't just enable a technology because it's a buzzword. Look for value for your operations. Trust but verify that you can meet your goals. And don't try to do it on your own. Look for a vendor who's done it. If you're looking for a reliable vendor, you can count on Enabling."

> **"We are often asked to consider using other providers to assist our collaboration efforts, but the trust we have in our longstanding partnership with Enabling is too strong to consider any changes."**
>
> **Les Kidwell, Director**

In closing, Tawiah mentions how "I see Enabling as an extension of our team. It's hard to put a price tag on that, but it's like we have a private help desk to engage on any number of issues. **Enabling's not just a vendor, but a talent pool. They're more like family than a vendor.**"

To point your organization on a similar path to success as the National Aquarium, contact
info@enablingtechcorp.com