



Malaysian fund company experiences productivity boost with online collaboration tools

Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB) is one of the largest fund management companies in Malaysia with more than USD79 billion in assets in November 2020. In May 2020, PNB embarked on a technology overhaul as part of a five-year plan to strengthen efficiencies and drive performance. Working with Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365, the company built a culture of collaboration that allowed staff to work together regardless of location. PNB's remote working arrangements gave it a lead over its peers during the COVID-19 health crisis.



Customer

PNB

Website:

<http://www.pnb.com.my>

Country: Malaysia

Industry: Finance

Customer size: Large
(1,000 - 9,999 employees)

Customer profile

PNB is Malaysia's largest fund management company which owns the country's largest unit trust management company, Amanah Saham Nasional Berhad (ASNB).

Software and services

Azure DevOps,
Azure DevTest
Microsoft 365 E3, E1
Microsoft Teams
SharePoint



90 percent of staff worked at home during lockdown

One of Malaysia's largest fund managers, Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB) served 14.5 million account holders within the country in November 2020, and as of January 27, 2021, the company had 1,748 staff. The scale of its operations led to several pain points in administration and workflows. Mailbox storage space kept running out, and emails kept bouncing. The Technology Division was swamped with mundane tasks instead of focusing on value-added services. "Operationally, these small tasks are taking too much of my team's time," explains Muzaffar bin Othman, Chief Technology Officer at PNB. "There were always requests for setting up IDs, and requests for additional mailbox space. There were always some concerns about spam," he adds.

There was also a lack of integration and file access. "I had to prepare big, shared folders, physical shared folders in my data centers, for the staff to access," Muzaffar recalls. "People inside the organization were not able to collaborate because there are no standard tools that make it seamless. And because it's difficult to work together virtually, they don't collaborate as often."

PNB's digital transformation

PNB had a vision of being a forward-looking digital company, with a modern and mobile-ready workforce. Muzaffar knew that the company needed a solution that allowed shared files across multiple devices and users—one that is not limited by size or storage capacity.

With assistance from Microsoft's FastTrack team and Customer Success Manager, PNB promptly rolled out components of Microsoft 365, taking into account the change management process needed to prepare users ahead of time. Early communication and strong direction from the top management was key for a smooth and successful adoption. The business also switched to Microsoft 365 and supporting solutions. Staff could now collaborate simultaneously via Microsoft 365 and SharePoint, regardless of device or operating system. "In the past, if I wanted to run on spreadsheets, I would do version control," Muzaffar explains. "I create a spreadsheet and I say to my staff, 'Okay, you add in a color and tell me which ones you added, then send it to the other manager.' Now, I don't have to do that. I just open up the file, share with people, and they can collaborate at the same time through co-authoring. This helps in terms of reducing the effort to do collaborative work."

One interesting outcome is how quickly and widely the organization embraced Microsoft Teams. With more than 90 percent uptake, PNB has been able to push its work-anywhere proposition and improve collaboration. Widespread adoption of the new tools led to increased productivity. "Staff can focus on taking care of customers and looking at compliance, instead of dealing with issues such as device compatibility and access," notes Muzaffar.

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Muzaffar bin Othman
Chief Technology Officer
PNB

A timely transition

For Muzaffar, the digital journey could not have come at a better time. Just months into 2020, Malaysia implemented a Movement Control Order (MCO) in light of the COVID-19 health crisis, which forced many companies to adopt remote working arrangements on short notice. While others scrambled to catch up, it was work as usual for PNB. The MCO saw 90 percent of the company's employees working from home. This ease of transition was facilitated by clear direction from the top and the provision of intuitive tools.

As PNB makes plans to move to its new office building, Muzaffar sees the organization going paperless even more. "I want to do approvals online," he says. "The guys at Microsoft mentioned Power Automate, which can help automate processes. The bottom line for me is to make sure that approvals are all done online," he explains.

Even though collaboration and mobile working has improved, Muzaffar wants to push the limits even further. "In the future, everyone is going to be mobile, everyone is going to be issued a laptop. From that device, they should be able to do almost everything that they do in the office today. Approving files, collaborating in Excel, holding meetings, attending the town hall, all those sorts of things should be available online. With Microsoft tools, you can always get access to important documents and files anywhere on any device."

As PNB moves into the future, it continues to fine-tune transformation plans to build more agility and resilience. The focus remains on refining processes in high-impact areas to support the core business, including modernizing the workplace and taking advantage of cloud computing.

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Digital transformation to:

- Empower employees
- Optimize operations
- Transform business

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