

The Sentinel logo is the word 'Sentinel' in a blue, sans-serif font, followed by a grid of small squares in blue, orange, and red. It is enclosed in a white circle with a blue border.

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

SENTINEL HOUSING

Phoenix Software's Licensing Experts enable Sentinel Housing to optimise and futureproof its Microsoft licensing estate, while saving money

Sentinel Housing Association owns and manages 10,000 homes across 12 local authority areas in the South East of England. They're the fifth largest housing developer by size in the sector with an annual turnover of around £72 million. A Phoenix Software customer for over a decade, Sentinel engaged with Phoenix when its Microsoft Enterprise Agreement was up for renewal to ensure its new software agreements aligned with its long-term ambitions for cloud computing.

CHALLENGE

As a long-term customer, Phoenix Software was aware that Sentinel's three-year Enterprise Agreement (EA) was approaching renewal. To ensure plenty of time to evaluate its requirements and provide appropriate licensing recommendations, Phoenix first contacted Sentinel five months prior to the expiration of its EA.

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge

Mitigating any price rises in its Microsoft software during the renewal of its Enterprise Agreement.

Solution

Switched to an Enterprise Subscription Agreement while taking advantage of the favourable pricing offered by the Public Sector Cloud Transformation Agreement (CTA).

Benefits

55% reduction in software costs with the added benefit of 100 Office 365 licences allowing Sentinel to begin transitioning users to Microsoft's cloud software at a pace that is right for the organisation and its users.

Sentinel was keen to retain an Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft due to the reassurance and protection that such agreements provide during software audits, which was top of mind for Sentinel as the housing association had only recently been through a Microsoft audit as a result of the vendor's targeting of housing associations at the time. While Sentinel had sailed through the audit with top marks, the experience had reaffirmed the benefits of licensing its software via an Enterprise Agreement so it was keen to maintain this model going forward.

The main challenge facing Sentinel Housing was mitigating any price rises in its software, as Microsoft had increased its prices year-on-year since Sentinel last renewed its EA three years previously. Sentinel was also keen to build greater flexibility into its licensing agreement that would help it to migrate to Office 365 and Azure in the future. While the business was not ready to switch everything to the cloud just yet, it did not want to be locked into an inflexible agreement that would make such a transition impossible until its next renewal in another three years' time.

SOLUTION

The engagement began with a consultation with Sentinel to understand its current userbase and software usage, long-term IT strategy and software preferences. While Sentinel's IT infrastructure is operated primarily on-premise, the Association was keen to trial Office 365 with some of its users to lay the foundations for a full cloud rollout in the future.

To build in the flexibility that Sentinel Housing wanted in its software licensing agreement, Phoenix Software proposed that Sentinel switch from the traditional perpetual software licence agreement to a subscription licence with the adoption of an Enterprise Subscription Agreement (ESA).

At the same time, the new ESA would take advantage of Microsoft's new Public Sector Cloud Transformation Agreement (CTA); a suite of special terms and prices pre-negotiated by the Crown Commercial Service on behalf of Public Sector organisations in the UK. The CTA provides a way for UK Public Sector customers that are looking to transition to the cloud to purchase Microsoft software licences at more favourable prices. The CTA would help Sentinel Housing to build an agreement that would combine on-premise and cloud licensing while mitigating the price rises in Microsoft software over the last three years.

The licensing agreement that Sentinel Housing chose consisted of 275 on-premise Microsoft Office Pro Plus agreements combined with 100 Office 365 E3 licences. All licences were purchased as a subscription under a Cloud Transformation Agreement.



BENEFITS

The benefits for Sentinel Housing can be summarised accordingly:

- **55% reduction in software costs** – taking account of the uplift year-on-year in Microsoft's pricing during Sentinel's previous agreement, Phoenix Software has saved Sentinel Housing around 55% in its software costs by renewing through the Cloud Transformation Agreement

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Daniel Adams
Infrastructure Manager
Sentinel Housing Association

(CTA) contract as opposed to a Government Level D volume licensing agreement. By looking at all of the various licensing options available to Sentinel; CTA vs. regular Enterprise Agreement, perpetual vs. subscription agreement, on-premise vs. user-licensing, Phoenix could get the absolute best price for Sentinel Housing's software.

- **Able to meet strict CTA requirements** – Microsoft's Cloud Transformation Agreement (CTA) has strict criteria for adoption. Phoenix worked with Sentinel Housing to ensure it met the minimum requirements needed to adopt the CTA prior to moving forward with the agreement.
- **Seamless transition** – the new agreement went live in conjunction with the prior agreement coming to an end. The process of preparing the new licensing agreement and transferring the 100 Office 365 licences from device CALs to user CALs took Phoenix Software barely a few weeks.
- **Cloud-ready (without the commitment)** – with 100 Office 365 licences available, Sentinel can begin transitioning users over to Microsoft's cloud software at a pace that is right for the organisation and its users. While Office 365 includes a cloud-hosted Exchange mailbox for each user, Sentinel chose to retain all its users' email on the organisation's on-premise Exchange server. This allows it to move to cloud hosting gradually without committing it to a specific path.

Commenting on the flexibility of the agreement, Daniel Adams, Infrastructure Manager at Sentinel Housing Association states, “We can stay onsite, migrate entirely to Azure or operate an Office 365/on-premise hybrid solution in the future. The important thing is we have the flexibility to do what is right for the organisation. We have been able to keep both doors open without committing ourselves to one path in the future, while at the same time reducing our software costs without compromising on the software we use.”

“The entire process was a seamless experience from start to finish. From the very first phone call five months before our EA was due for renewal through to the consultation period and eventual licensing transition, Phoenix demonstrated proactivity and professionalism throughout,” concludes Adams.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

To find out how we can help you transform any aspect of your IT estate, contact the Phoenix Team now on:

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