



BUYING PEACE OF MIND



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OF COLLEGES

Association of Colleges (AoC) is the national voice for further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges in England.

The Association of Colleges are a not-for-profit membership organisation established in 1996 by colleges, for colleges. Their members make up almost 95% of the sector – transforming 2.2 million lives each year. Acting as the collective voice, they represent and promote the interests of colleges, and provide their members with high-quality professional support services, including training, events, and recruitment.

The Situation

AoC planned to use dotMailer for bulk electronic mail from the organisation. The dotMailer service was cloud-based, however, it needed to access the internal Dynamics CRM system. The AoC Dynamics CRM deployment is located within the AoC infrastructure and therefore required a perimeter component to authenticate the dotMailer service and utilise the CRM information for bulk email sends.

In order to facilitate this, the 25sevenIT team (25sevenIT was acquired in 2018 by Timico) were asked to deploy a solution to enable dotMailer and Dynamics CRM to communicate effectively.

The Solution

ADFS (Active Directory Federation Services) is a standards-based service that allows the secure sharing of identity information, between cloud-based services and authenticated users. The installation consisted of two Windows Server 2012 R2 Hyper-V deployments, which hosted the four AoC ADFS server virtual machines. ADFS was installed with high availability to mitigate server failure.

Additional network configurations were required to enable the ADFS communication channel. The AoC IP providers, JA.Net, were involved to identify a spare external IP address, enabling communications to be supported from all locations.

Additional Cisco firewall rules were also implemented to enable external requests to be routed correctly for the service to operate.

The deployment involved input from dotMailer to set out their requirements and liaison with Crimson, Dynamics CRM suppliers, to ensure all system changes were co-ordinated effectively and with minimal downtime.

The installation, test phase and live implementation took around 4 weeks to complete.





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The Result

With the ADFS service deployed, AoC have a key component already available to support an ongoing IT strategy of moving services to the cloud.

ADFS provides single sign-on capabilities to many cloud deployments, therefore AoC can harness this deployment and migrate key elements of their IT infrastructure to the cloud with ease, and with minimal downtime and disruption.

"We are a tough customer, but the 25sevenIT team consistently exceed our expectations. They are always available with a professional, yet friendly voice when we need them and solve most issues remotely within minutes. They also come into the office on a regular basis to conduct general maintenance and security updates which keep our systems running smoothly. We find their knowledgeable input at our monthly review meetings particularly helpful in ensuring that our IT infrastructure is always developing in line with our strategic growth plans. As a public company we need our IT spend to be as accountable as anything else in the business and the monthly service contract has proved to be a very cost-effective way of buying peace of mind."

Peter Brophy, Finance Director, AoC

