

## Google Cloud Results

- Inspired more frequent communication via barrierless chat for a remote workforce
- Eliminated spending on redundant technologies and expensive support providers
- Empowered IT staff with actionable security insights to protect organizational data

## How RE/MAX of Reading became a virtual office over a weekend using Google Cloud

When RE/MAX of Reading closed its office and transitioned its team to a virtual workforce in response to the COVID-19, it was quick. Members of the executive team discussed the closure on a Friday and communicated the decision to their team by the following Monday. By Tuesday, everyone was working from home. Of course, the safety of their staff and clients was the utmost concern; however, reducing the impact on business productivity during the transition was looming. How could a bustling office with 180 employees and agents, abruptly restructure their organization while continuing day-to-day business?

Fortunately for RE/MAX of Reading, they were able to do just that using Google Workspace, Google's cloud-based communication and collaboration toolset. Tavia Ritter, RE/MAX of Reading's IT Operations Manager, shared, "If we weren't using Google Workspace, we never would have made this shift as quickly and smoothly as we did. We pivoted on a dime. Our legacy system would not have supported our business in this time [COVID-19] of transition." The swiftness with which RE/MAX of Reading inducted staff to telework is nothing short of impressive, especially considering that before that weekend, the organization hadn't yet completed the full migration to the Google Workspace platform.

### Modeling a successful deployment

In the second half of 2019, Ritter and team began assessing productivity platforms to replace the organization's legacy systems (Microsoft Hosted Exchange server & Dropbox). Managed Service Provider (MSP) fees had become cost-prohibitive. These additional fees coupled with limited integrations between the Exchange and Dropbox platforms along with the other business apps -- Docusign, CRM, telephony, and marketing apps to name a few-- created inefficiencies and potential security risks-- not to mention a cumbersome experience for users. "We needed a platform that could bring it all together for us," stated Ritter. "It's just simpler with Google Workspace Enterprise.

RE/MAX of Reading partnered with Suitebriar, a Google Cloud Premier Partner, to guide their Google Workspace deployment. The deployment workstreams included data migration, staff training and ongoing technical support. "The Suitebriar team is extremely knowledgeable and we leaned on their expertise heavily throughout our migration," stated Ritter. To communicate and prepare staff for the upcoming technology implementation, Ritter's lean, all-female IT team of four (Kate Flowers, Kayla Myers, and Stephanie Schirmer) worked in lockstep with Suitebriar to customize a detailed communication plan designed to build excitement around the transition.

Zach Mowen, Senior Account Manager with Suitebriar said, "Tavia's team is a great model for our customers as an example for making a deployment specific to company culture". Mowen went on to describe, "Our team [Suitebriar] assisted with communication templates and the beginnings of a



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Tavia Ritter  
IT Operations Manager  
RE/MAX of Reading

Google Help Site. The RE/MAX of Reading team really made it their own!" RE/MAX of Readings culture shined through in their campaign slogan, "Fall in love with your email!" This messaging was injected into every internal channel including office posters, newsletters and email signatures. The Google Site delivered a swath of informative -- sometimes hilarious -- videos outlining timeline, reminders, and what to expect.

While resources covering how to respond to a pandemic were not included with the deployment, the timing was perfect.

### Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis shut down businesses in Pennsylvania less than a month after RE/MAX of Reading's Feb 14th Gmail go-live date. The speed with which all employees and agents adapted to their new virtual work environment is a testament to the IT teams' Gmail transition planning.

Migrating all documents from Dropbox to Google Drive was scheduled to begin in late March; however, that timeline was accelerated out of sheer necessity. Over the weekend, between the executive team's decision and the announcement to staff on Monday, RE/MAX of Reading's IT Operations Manager, migrated all documents from Dropbox to Google Drive.

That Monday morning, in a series of town hall-style meetings hosted via Hangouts Meet, all employees and agents were made aware that the office would close temporarily and that they would be working remotely using Google Workspace. Reading's IT staff then conducted several one-off virtual meetings to onboard and train all users on Google Drive.

Speaking about the experience a mere 10 days after the transition, Mrs. Ritter is the picture of composure amidst a background of barking dogs and squealing children erupting from our homes. "Now that we have this chat feature, I honestly feel like we communicate during the day far more often than we ever did when we were sitting right next to each other in the office." This sentiment doesn't stop with the IT department and Chat. Google Drive was quickly adopted company-wide and the finance department almost immediately created a shared Sheet to aggregate information on how preferred title companies would be processing transactions as a result of COVID-19.

Like every small business, RE/MAX of Reading has had to make difficult decisions in the wake of the outbreak. All staff members are investigating ways to reduce dues for their agents. Eliminating MSP and 3rd party email management service spending, has been critical. Before switching to Google Workspace, Ritter relied on their MSP for everything Microsoft related, from monitoring their email security via a 3rd party to onboarding and offboarding users, which resulted in hefty fees and delayed risk mitigation. Now Ritter can identify and triage security threats immediately, even perform organization-wide bulk actions using insights surfaced by the Google Workspace Security Center. Ritter also uses the Admin Panel to manage security settings along with devices, users and data.

When asked what's next for the Reading office, Ritter's priorities include improving data security and #stayahomestaysafe.

### Get the most from the Cloud.

Founded in 2010 as one of the first Google Workspace launch partners, Suitebriar's expertise and offerings now span the entire portfolio of Google Cloud products. Today, as a Google Cloud Premier Partner and recipient of the Google Cloud Work Transformation Specialization, our team of certified experts can help your company find and deploy the right solutions to accelerate your digital transformation and get the most from the Cloud.