

No Longer Needed, But Still Valuable

How the think tank adelphi generated budget for new investments by selling unused software licences,

**while staying true to
its commitment
to sustainability.**



What To Do with Licences, You no Longer Need?

A leading European think tank found a smart answer. Instead of letting unused software licences sit idle, adelphi sold them and recovered budget following its migration to the cloud.



Top secret: Why adelphi Delayed Its Move to the Cloud

When you work with governments and international institutions, IT security is viewed differently. This was also true for adelphi, one of Europe's leading independent think-and-do tanks for climate, environment and sustainable development. The organisation advises ministries, development agencies and institutions around the world, often on projects involving sensitive data, strict security requirements and significant political relevance.

adelphi's workforce is as international as the topics it addresses. Around 350 employees work from its main offices in Berlin and Munich, supporting projects across Africa, the Americas, Asia and beyond. Many team members are multilingual, work remotely and collaborate across cultures and time zones every day. Such diversity requires more than cultural awareness. It demands an IT infrastructure that is reliable, secure and able to operate globally.

For many years, adelphi followed a clear principle: on-premises first. The organisation ran its own

servers, maintained its own infrastructure and retained full control over its systems. „We consistently relied on perpetual licences and operated our own data centre,“ says Daniel Högele, Head of IT. „There have long been concerns that the EU-US Data Privacy Framework could be challenged in the future. If that happened, the legal basis for using Microsoft 365 could become uncertain. We did not want to take that risk.“ Data protection and compliance concerns were not the only reasons for avoiding the cloud. „From a financial perspective, an on-premises environment was also the most sensible solution for us.“ And it worked. Whether employees were in Berlin, Brussels or on a remote Pacific island, adelphi's teams remained productive and connected without relying on cloud infrastructure.

The Move to Microsoft 365

Eventually, the organisation's technology strategy changed. According to Daniel Högele, the shift was driven largely by external expectations. „We were more or less pushed in that direction because everyone kept asking why adelphi was not using Microsoft

Teams.“ Business partners expected standardisation, and customers increasingly viewed collaboration platforms such as Teams as essential. As a result, adelphi moved away from its isolated environment and adopted Microsoft 365. Despite this transition, the organisation did not compromise on security or data protection. Its IT strategy evolved, but its standards remained unchanged.

Clearing Out Legacy Licences

The move to Microsoft 365 E3 made several existing software assets redundant. „With E3, Office licensing is included, and Client Access Licences (CALs) are also covered by the enterprise plan. That left us with a considerable number of licences we no longer needed.“ Simply allowing these assets to expire did not seem sensible. „Letting them go unused would have been a waste.“ The team therefore explored whether the licences could be resold. Three categories of software were identified: Microsoft Exchange Server licences, Microsoft Office licences and Windows Server CALs. MRM Distribution emerged as the most reliable partner for the project and offered to evaluate the software assets. The biggest challenge was gaining a complete overview of the existing licence estate. This involved locating licence certificates, identifying where licences were stored, retrieving CSP IDs for perpetual licences, checking remaining activation rights and reconciling all information with the internal licence management system. „To be honest, finding the original invoices was probably the hardest part,“ says Högele. „Some of them were so old that I felt they might have disappeared digitally by now.“

MRM Distribution Takes Over

adelphi found a trusted partner in MRM Distribution. The company not only purchased the eligible licences but also guided adelphi through the entire process. Not every licence could be included. In some cases, supporting documentation or certificates were missing. „Anything we could not adequately document was excluded by MRM, which was entirely understandable. Fortunately, most of the licences qualified.“ In the end, adelphi recovered €6,000 for software that would otherwise have remained unused. „Anything that increases our budget is welcome. The effort involved was entirely reasonable, and I would certainly do it again.“

Sustainability in Practice

For an organisation dedicated to climate action, environmental protection and sustainable development, reusing software assets rather than writing them off was a natural decision. adelphi believes in practical solutions that contribute to a sustainable future, and this philosophy extends to its digital strategy. „Being able to pass our unused software on to others fits perfectly with what we stand for.“ Sustainability is not just about energy consumption. It also involves making responsible use of existing resources. Daniel Högele highlights an additional benefit: „I am pleased that other organisations can reduce their licensing costs by purchasing the software through MRM at a lower price than buying directly from Microsoft.“

MR HÖGELE PREPARED THE LICENSING DOCUMENTATION EXCEPTIONALLY WELL. THIS IS EXTREMELY HELPFUL WHEN PURCHASING REUSABLE SOFTWARE LICENCES, AS WE MUST VERIFY EXACTLY WHICH PRODUCTS ARE BEING SOLD, IN WHAT QUANTITIES AND FROM WHICH SOURCE THEY ORIGINATE. WHEN ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE OUTSET, THE ENTIRE TRANSACTION CAN BE COMPLETED EFFICIENTLY AND IN FULL LEGAL COMPLIANCE.



TIM BLOEMKE,
PURCHASING MANAGER,
MRM DISTRIBUTION

IF YOU HAVE YOUR LICENSING DATA READILY AVAILABLE, THE PROCESS IS WORTHWHILE, EVEN FOR RELATIVELY SMALL QUANTITIES. MRM SUPPORTED US WITH CLEAR REQUIREMENTS AND FAST COMMUNICATION.

THE COLLABORATION AND ADVICE WERE EXTREMELY PROFESSIONAL AND HELPFUL.

I ALWAYS KNEW WHAT THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE, **AND THAT WAS INVALUABLE.**

DANIEL HÖGELE,
HEAD OF IT,
THINK-TANK ADELPHI



Key Takeaway

The adelphi case demonstrates that organisations should review their existing software assets after a cloud migration. Selling reusable licences, freeing up licence inventory and recovering budget can create real value from software that is no longer required.

A simple step that combines financial efficiency with sustainable IT management.

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