

American National Reduces New Workspace Creation by 50% and Avoids Sprawl with AvePoint Cloud Governance and Policy & Insights



Customer Location

Galveston, Texas

Industry

Insurance

Platform

Microsoft 365

Critical Needs

- Controlled Teams and Planner creation
- Guaranteed policy enforcement
- Reduced IT Burden

Solution

AvePoint Cloud Governance
AvePoint Policies & Insights

★ Success Highlights

- Streamlined provisioning
- Reduced opportunities for sprawl
- Hands-off workspace management
- 50% decrease in new workspace creation requests

🔍 Customer Profile

The American National companies include American National Insurance Company and its insurance affiliates. American National Insurance Company, founded in 1905 and headquartered in Galveston, Texas, offers a broad line of products and services, including life insurance, annuities, health insurance, credit insurance, pension products and property and casualty insurance for personal lines, agribusiness and certain commercial exposures. The American National companies operate in all 50 states.

⚙️ The Challenge

American National rolled out Teams in 2017. Before a company-wide release, they knew they wanted to put guardrails in place to control workspace creation and prevent sprawl. When they introduced SharePoint a few years earlier, they learned the hard way just how easily an environment could get out of hand. Lack of upfront regulation resulted in an excess of unmanaged sites, forcing the insurance company to adopt a burdensome, labor-intensive process for IT to lockdown the collaboration platform.

“This time, we were smart enough to think ahead and ‘wrap’ the tool before we presented it to the user,” explains Thuan Kha, M365 and SharePoint admin, American National Insurance Company. “We decided to introduce Teams to a test group first to determine how people were using it and what issues they had.”

During this pilot phase, they realized their employees didn’t fully understand how to maximize the benefits of Teams. Common issues included requesting a new Team where a simple group chat would suffice, abandoning Teams and Planners shortly after creation, and creating Private Channels without IT and Team owners’ buy-in, resulting in a sprawled environment and channels no one could be held accountable for.

Thuan was beginning to realize this might be a bigger mess than SharePoint. They needed to get ahead of the sprawl and create policies that would control the environment before they introduced the tool to the wider organization. They also needed something relatively hands-off, that wouldn’t require too much from Thuan and her team. They started looking for a tool that could do just that.

The AvePoint Solution

American National began looking for solutions, narrowing it down to about four or five providers. The other providers they considered required too much from Thuan and her team; they would need to frequently be in the system, configuring policies. Cloud Governance's automated nature, paired with AvePoint's 24/7 customer support, made the partnership a no-brainer.

"AvePoint's support team has been phenomenal," Thuan says. "I like the fact I can pick up the phone and someone answers and stays on the line with me until my problem is resolved."

The tools have been successful as well. "With AvePoint, we can automate Planner creation, which requires a Group. It's a tedious administrative task to create a Group just for Planner, but with Cloud Governance's streamlined provisioning, we don't have to worry about it."

Cloud Governance prompts users to answer simple business questions to confirm they are always using the right tool for the job. Even if a user does create a Team incorrectly or unnecessarily, the solution's automated archiving and deletion policies will take care of it, placing no burden on the IT team.

American National also uses AvePoint's Policies & Insights (PI) solution to enforce the policies put in place with Cloud Governance. The insurance company leverages PI to scan their Teams environment and revert any changes to "allow members to create private channels" setting, controlling and securing new workplace creation.

Since implementing the two solutions, the daily requests for new workspaces have dropped by 50%. The users seem to be adopting well to the new system, as Thuan's team is receiving fewer questions. "It's difficult to monetarily quantify the value, but because the solutions are so hands-off and reliable, my team can spend the majority of their time doing something else."

The Bottom Line

Thanks to Cloud Governance and Policies & Insights, American National has a controlled workspace to collaborate. "We see the solutions working when we get our monthly report," says Thuan. "We don't have uncontrolled growth. We are saving money on storage and will continue to save as we grow bigger and the solution scales with us."

If you are about to roll-out a new collaboration workspace, Thuan has some advice for you: "Don't wait until you have an issue; get ahead of it. If you don't, your users will get used to the free-for-all and your policy enforcement will be more difficult. Get in front of it before it grows out of control, or the effort to clean it up will be even more costly."

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- THUAN KHA, M365 AND SHAREPOINT ADMIN, AMERICAN NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY

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