AvePoint®

Kao Corporation Delivers Safe External Collaboration in Microsoft Teams, Simplifies Lifecycle Management, and Cuts IT Service Time with AvePoint Cloud Governance

Customer Location
Tokyo, Japan

Industry
Manufacturing

Platform
Microsoft 365

Critical Needs
- Enable and manage secure collaboration with external users
- Reduce the workload for managing team members
- Eliminate security risks and diminished search results due to abandoned teams and content

Solution
- AvePoint Cloud Governance

⭐ Success Highlights

- Streamlined management of lifecycle and permissions in Teams
- Significantly faster creation of teams with external users; reduced IT provisioning time
- Indefinite storage for audit logs
- Future plans to manage SharePoint Online with Cloud Governance

🔍 Customer Profile

Kao Corporation is a leader in personal care products, cosmetics, laundry, and cleaning products. For 134 years, Kao has been contributing to lifestyles enriched by "Yoki-Monozukuri." As of December 2020, Kao had 33,409 employees on a consolidated basis, with sales reaching 1,382 billion yen.

In 2021, they will launch a new medium-term management plan called "K25." While maintaining the basic mission of contributing to having an enriched life, the organization is aiming to establish a new "Kao style" that will also focus on the global environment and human life.

⚙ The Challenge

The Kao Corporation ("Kao") began using Microsoft Teams in July 2017, but it really accelerated use across all groups in 2019. This use was not limited to internal communication, and the organization has expanded to include collaboration with groups outside the company.

At first, Kao began using Teams within its Information Systems Division. But as word of mouth spread, a coordinated system was set up to promote Teams use between different divisions. In January 2019, a full-scale Teams implementation with tablets was initiated by Kao Group Customer Marketing (KCMK), a beauty company responsible for marketing to consumers. Three months later, a companywide effort brought Teams to the entire Kao Group.

This movement caused three major challenges to surface. The issues were implementing and managing secure collaboration with external users, the growing workload of managing teams with lots of members, and the security risks and the diminished quality of search results due to abandoned teams and content that were no longer being used.

And as the COVID-19 pandemic limited opportunities to visit with customers, Kao

wanted to expand and streamline the use of Teams for collaboration with users outside of the company while maintaining effective security and avoiding increases to the operational burden.

"Initially, while we were focusing on using it within the group, we were also using the standard features of Microsoft Teams for application management," said Katsuya Kokubo, Vice President, Enterprise Information Solutions at Kao. "At the same time, we began to get more and more requests to invite even people outside the company into teams for collaboration. To achieve this in a secure way, we had to take another look at our system for application management."

Meanwhile, two other challenges arose. The first was enabling the management of permissions through integration with security groups in Microsoft's Active Directory. Although Teams' enabled single sign-on integrated with AD, members had to be registered individually for permissions for each team, which took a huge amount of work during personnel changes.

The other concern: providing support for an ever-increasing number of teams. By 2019, the number of teams had reached 7,500, and it was expected to keep growing. Kao needed a way to implement life cycle management so teams that were no longer needed could be accurately identified and securely deleted.

💡 The AvePoint Solution

To solve these issues, Kao began looking for a new application management system in June 2019. This is when they turned their focus to AvePoint Cloud Governance.

Cloud Governance empowers users with self-service IT resources for provisioning, moving, or restructuring Microsoft 365 content, as well as lifecycle and permissions management. It integrates with Teams and the broader Microsoft 365 platform — including Yammer communities and SharePoint sites — so users have guidelines to make informed decisions.

Implementing Cloud Governance has enabled Kao to support secure collaboration with groups outside of the company while also streamlining and accelerating once-manual tasks. Managing team members was also simplified, thanks to the

integration with security groups in Microsoft's Active Directory. Lifecycles are also now managed by notifying team administrators about teams that have been inactive for a certain period.

Kao worked with AvePoint Japan K.K. ("AvePoint"), a Microsoft partner, to meet these requirements.

"We held meetings with multiple companies to consider their solutions, but AvePoint Cloud Governance was the only one that could address all three issues," said Koji Kondo, Leader of the Teams Administrators on the ICT Group's Office Infrastructure Team in Kao's ESM Department in the Information Systems Division. "We also decided to go with AvePoint not only because of the functionality but also because we were hopeful it would provide more flexible support."

The company rolled out Cloud Governance in phases starting in January 2020. A pilot project focusing on the Information Systems Division was launched to implement invitations for external users, said Keisuke Nakatani, a Teams Administrator on the ICT Group's Office Infrastructure Team in Kao's ESM Department in the Information Systems Division. Last year, the features were released for domestic users and, later, external users for overseas group companies. Kao plans to expand all remaining features to overseas group companies in 2021.

Personalized service from AvePoint has benefitted the project.

"While they already had the ability to manage permissions through integration with security groups for newly created teams, we needed to develop additional functionality to meet Kao's needs," said Yuki Watanabe, a Technical Senior Director at AvePoint. "For Kao, with an enormous number of teams already in place, they needed to be able to integrate security groups into previously existing teams, not just new teams. That is why we worked with the development team in the U.S. to release new features."

Thanks to the AvePoint development team, "they were able to quickly respond to our needs and add the necessary features, and we are very grateful for their support," said Masami Shiba, a Teams Administrator on the ICT Group's Office Infrastructure Team in Kao's ESM Department in the Information Systems Division. The features that now allow them to respond to user requests have been well-received within the company.

"The introduction of AvePoint Cloud Governance and the management of teams with AvePoint Cloud Governance made creating external teams faster," Nakatani said.

Before, it used to take at least five days to complete the setup process, from application and team launch to external user registration between the relevant departments. Now, those teams can be made available on the same day once an approval is completed.

"This has led to an increase in the use of teams with people outside the company, with 197 teams created by April 2021," Nakatani said. "We used to mainly use email to exchange messages and share files with people outside the company, but there has been a gradual shift to Teams."

Managing permissions for team members has been streamlined by the integration with AD's security groups. By the end of February 2021, 212 teams had been integrated with security groups, which is expected to save more than100 hours per year in user management. Because even teams created in Microsoft Teams can now be integrated with security groups, added savings in workload are expected.

Managing teams and user lifecycles is more secure. "155 external teams that were previously created but were no longer used have been deleted," Nakatani said. "By properly managing the lifecycle, we no longer run the risk of leaving files accessible from outside the company."

Furthermore, audit log management and storage are easier. "Microsoft 365 stores audit logs for a maximum of 90 days, but with the number of global security incidents on the rise, we needed to retain audit logs for longer periods," Kondo

said. "Using AvePoint Cloud Governance, we can store audit logs indefinitely."

Shiba added that integrating the audit logs from Microsoft 365 has "made it possible to check the audit logs using the management screen provided by AvePoint. The user interface is also easier to use, such as for setting up filter conditions to extract the desired information."

👉 The Bottom Line

Cloud Governance has positioned Kao for safe, successful collaboration. This year, the creation of new teams will be consolidated into Cloud Governance, and the team-building feature in Microsoft Teams will be locked. Existing teams will also be migrated to management under Cloud Governance, and eventually all teams will be managed under Cloud Governance.

"The advantages of AvePoint Cloud Governance are so significant that we can no longer operate without it," Kokubo said, adding that the organization plans to use the solution to manage use of SharePoint Online.

Leaders also see value in the solution as the nature and location of their work evolves.

"COVID-19 has changed the way we work on a global scale. However, because we were already using Teams within the Kao Group, we were able to smoothly transition to working from home," Kokubo said. "We will continue to use Teams as the center of our communication, and by committing to AvePoint Cloud Governance for application management, we hope to make our working environment more efficient and effective."

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> *— KATSUYA KOKUBO, VICE PRESIDENT, ENTERPRISE INFORMATION SOLUTIONS, KAO CORPORATION*