Simpler Operations, Clearer Compliance, Smarter Costs: How GHD Scaled Its Governance Lifecycle with AvePoint

Customer Profile: GHD Group

GHD is an employee-owned, global professional services company with more than 12,000 professionals worldwide, delivering complex projects across water, energy, and sustainability.

GHD operates a large-scale, globally distributed technology environment that supports high volumes of project work each week, with each project requiring its own dedicated collaboration site. Working across regions and time zones, collaboration is central to how GHD delivers at scale.

Location

Brisbane, Australia

Industry

Professional Services

Platform

Microsoft 365, SharePoint Online, Microsoft Teams, Viva Engage

Critical Needs

- Support high-volume project creation without relying on manual processes
- Reduce delays caused by ticket-based provisioning
- Maintain visibility into SharePoint Online site usage, ownership, and user access, including identifying up to 70% of sites ready for archiving
- Manage collaboration environments throughout their full lifecycle, including cost-efficient storage for inactive data
- Ensure governance scales alongside continued organisational growth

Success Highlights

- Reduced collaboration site provisioning from weeks to minutes
- Automated creation of SharePoint Online, Microsoft Teams, and Viva Engage sites
- Strengthened security and compliance by automatically archiving up to 70% of inactive SharePoint sites
- Centralised governance across tens of thousands of collaboration spaces
- Ongoing recertification of users to support compliance
- Enhanced governance visibility through dashboards tracking site activity, ownership, and user access

The Challenge

As remote work expanded during COVID, GHD significantly increased its use of Microsoft Teams and SharePoint to support collaboration across its global workforce. While this enabled teams to stay connected, it also placed new demands on how collaboration environments were provisioned and governed.

Before AvePoint, creating a new project site involved a manual, ticket-based process. Requests moved between teams via email and service desks, often across multiple time zones. In typical cases, provisioning took up to seven days, and in more complex scenarios, it extended into weeks.

As Kaine Sherwood, Collaborations Applications Platform Team Lead at GHD explained, delays were common when requests required clarification or follow-ups across regions, particularly between Australia and North America. According to Sherwood, the process relied heavily on manual processes and was very slow. “Sometimes, even with the time zones, someone in the Americas might be requesting a site and have to wait until our daytime before we could action it,” he shared.

As collaboration usage scaled rapidly, GHD identified an opportunity to strengthen lifecycle visibility across its expanding SharePoint and Teams estate, ensuring site usage, ownership, and user access could be reviewed more efficiently as the environment grew.

An earlier automation supported Microsoft Teams site creation, but SharePoint provisioning remained manual and lifecycle governance sat outside its scope. As the collaboration estate expanded, GHD sought out a more comprehensive approach that could unify provisioning and lifecycle governance under a single framework.

The AvePoint Solution

Addressing governance and lifecycle management with AvePoint was a natural next step for GHD. The organisation was already using AvePoint for backup, and when reviewing solutions to manage collaboration at scale, AvePoint stood out for its breadth and consistency.

After evaluating the market. GHD found that AvePoint brought together governance for SharePoint Online, Microsoft Teams, Viva Engage, and user management within the Confidence Platform. This breadth of coverage allowed GHD to address multiple priorities at once without introducing additional tools or fragmented processes, positioning AvePoint as a strong fit for GHD's environment among the solutions reviewed.

By leveraging AvePoint Cloud Governance, GHD aligned internal policies around naming standards, approvals, ownership requirements, and recertification schedules. Once implemented, AvePoint streamlined the provisioning of collaboration environments. With AvePoint solutions in place, users can request and create new project sites in minutes, improving efficiency and reducing delays previously caused by manual handoffs and time-zone constraints.

Provisioning across SharePoint sites, Teams sites, Viva Engage, and user management is fully automated. "What used to take days or weeks now takes minutes," Sherwood explained.

Governance now extends beyond site creation, with automation supporting GHD's existing policies and controls for collaboration environments. Automated workflows help streamline lifecycle activities, including user reviews, ownership recertification, and archiving or access restrictions for inactive sites, reducing manual administration while improving visibility across collaboration spaces.

Outcomes

After running AvePoint solutions for several years, GHD has established a more consistent and sustainable approach to collaboration governance.

Dashboards provide real-time visibility into site activity, ownership, and user access, giving teams a clearer, evidence-based view of how collaboration environments are being used to inform day-to-day governance decisions.

Lifecycle management has also delivered measurable results. Through automated recertification and cleanup workflows, up to 70% of inactive sites have been archived, restricted, or removed, helping GHD reduce sprawl and lower exposure from unused collaboration spaces.

With lifecycle management in place, being able to manage inactive sites at that scale gives GHD real confidence from a security and compliance perspective. With provisioning, governance, and lifecycle actions now automated, GHD's teams spend less time managing collaboration infrastructure and more time supporting the business.

The Road Ahead

GHD continues to refine how it manages collaboration as projects evolve. Long-term and completed projects are being transitioned into SharePoint, with AvePoint supporting the movement of data into lower-cost storage tiers where appropriate.

As Sherwood explained, this approach allows GHD to balance active collaboration needs with long-term cost efficiency.

"We've started moving some of our long-term and closed projects into SharePoint, and with AvePoint, we're able to shift that into lower-cost storage," he said.

With governance and lifecycle management now embedded into daily operations, GHD is well-positioned to support future growth while maintaining clarity, control, and confidence across its collaboration environment.

> *What's changed around the compliance and risk for us is now having the stats to back up that our sites are either used or not used, that our guest users were either active or removed from our environment. We find that the governance is so much easier. We have dashboards that show us how many guest users, whether they're deleted, active, or inactive.*
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> ***– KAINE SHERWOOD, COLLABORATION APPLICATIONS PLATFORM TEAM LEAD, GHD***

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