

Tidy thinking: how Exchange for Change leveraged strategic advice to solve for the now and beyond

A Strategic Advisory case study

About Exchange for Change

Since launching in 2017, Exchange for Change (EFC) has overseen the integrity of the NSW and ACT's Container Deposit Schemes, coordinating the return of 13 billion containers, 925,000 tonnes of recycled materials, and \$400 million in annual revenue.

It's tidy work for a small organisation with giant economic and environmental responsibilities. But as EFC outgrew their foundational IT, they knew they couldn't continue recycling an old approach to support future growth.

At a glance

Industry
Resources

Company size
30+

Country
Australia

Business challenge

EFC began life at a sprint, building complex IT systems on the run. When it became apparent they weren't able to scale from their start-up phase to the business they were becoming, EFC knew they needed a fresh IT approach.

The solution

Following a hard fought competitive tender, EFC selected Brennan to kickstart their transformation journey, commissioning us to conduct a wide ranging, independent IT review. Upon the strength of our report and its recommendations, EFC chose Brennan to implement many of the suggestions, supported by an outsourced Brennan IT Manager fully dedicated to EFC.

The Results

A revitalised governance approach to IT, based on Brennan input, has improved internal transparency. The flow of information reaching the right people at the right time is enabling healthier conversations on IT issues and opportunities. And with Brennan's expertise on call, EFC know they can call on a multidisciplinary team to enhance strategic thinking and implementation.

The Challenge

The NSW and ACT's Container Deposit Schemes run on a simple model: citizens are financially rewarded for recycling containers; and contributions from beverage suppliers fund the scheme.

The job of managing the scheme's overall integrity sits with Exchange for Change (EFC). Tasked with running the IT services, as well as auditing, risk and financial management, EFC sit at the heart of a complex collaboration between the beverage industry, the waste and recycling industry, and government.

Having won the contract, EFC had just six months to build the entire business prior to the public launch. “The schemes were originally set up to tackle litter reduction,” an EFC representative recalls. “And tick – we quickly hit that goal. In that context, the setup was incredibly successful.”

But as the scheme’s objectives evolved to focus on recycling and circular economy opportunities, EFC struggled to scale to the business they were becoming. A piecemeal approach to IT governance; hardware that underperformed on data-heavy duties; a bloated vendor list; blockers on staff requests for IT improvements. EFC’s challenge-list ran long.

“With a staff of 30, we’re very small. But we punch above our weight. We manage over \$400 million in annual revenue. We deal with the Environmental Protection Agency, massive beverage manufacturers, two State Governments – organisations that need us to be Tier One.”

The Solution

Knowing they needed a fresh IT approach, but not the shape it should take, EFC triggered a competitive bid for an independent, impartial, and holistic IT review. Brennan were selected to run it.

With a focus on ‘People, Process, Data & Technology’ framing our review process, we invited EFC’s staff to share their challenges. Engagement surveys marked tools, equipment, and IT systems. Vendor interviews gathered insights on how the partnering models were or weren’t working. And a comprehensive ‘current state’ analysis mapped out where EFC’s IT infrastructure was, where it needed to be, and what could be pragmatically achieved within budget.

Armed with Brennan’s recommendations, the EFC Executive Team were clear on their lead priority: “Our first call was to improve our IT Governance and put partnership structures in place,” recalls an EFC representative. “It really was moving from ‘do the best you can with what you have’ to a place of being able to step back, ask what’s appropriate now, then plan it out strategically.”

EFC had found the master key they needed to unlock a wholesale transformation. An IT Steering Committee with business-wide representation was created. Processes were formalised, with business divisions empowered to drive their IT agenda.

On the strength of the review, Brennan were appointed to develop a newly designed IT operating model. We authored sequenced “Go/No-go” lists. We created detailed timing, contingency, and risk analysis plans. Our vendor rationalisation found budget savings, leading to the approval of a new CRM system the marketing team had been asking for. And a company-wide laptop refresh was implemented – a big win for a remote-first organisation.

Brennan’s Strategic Advisory services led the engagements and delivery for 95% of the workload, culminating in the placement of an internal Brennan IT Manager – a full-time resource that sits within EFC.

Viewed in the round, the Strategic Advisory business unit has had a powerful impact as EFC’s digital transformation unfolded. “You helped us identify the risks. You gave advice on how other clients had successfully transitioned. You helped identify who to contact and when. And you guided us on which vendors we needed to talk to in advance, and those that could wait.”

“It was Brennan’s approach that won the day. You didn’t offer cookiecutter, boilerplate consulting. You really listened and really understood what we wanted.”

Exchange for Change,

The Result

With a robust Governance structure in place, Exchange for Change have unlocked a myriad of upsides.

EFC now have far greater transparency about what their real IT issues are, with the right information reaching the right levels at the right time. At an executive level, EFC leaders can share more details with the IT Steering Committee about wins, concerns, or projects pending.

Improved transparency has also flowed on to the wider team. "In the past, when they asked IT for something, they were often faced with resistance without understanding why. Now we can give them context and explain why certain decisions have been made and/or deferred. That's been a hugely positive experience."

With Brennan's Strategic Advisory team on call, EFC know they can always call on additional support. "If we want a second opinion, we'll get it. And we know there's a far bigger multidisciplinary team backing that call up. It's not just a one person show."

But ultimately, it's the strategic partnership between Brennan that has proven invaluable. "It was Brennan's approach that won the day. You didn't offer cookie-cutter, boilerplate consulting. You listened and really understood what we wanted. We view Brennan as genuine partners. It doesn't feel like you are vendors."



Strategic partnership



Staff augmentation



Reduced costs

The Brennan Experience

Brennan is uniquely positioned to transform, deliver, and manage your complete IT environment – so your people can have a truly seamless IT experience, wherever they are working.

We provide powerful technology solutions for Australian organisations, with a portfolio of services that ranges from strategy and advisory, to application development, to end-user support, and more.

Our teams are crazy about delivering an exceptional customer experience for our clients, which is why we continue to invest in our people, systems, and automation. This has resulted in us achieving a world-class Net Promoter Score of +80.

Get in touch with us today to see how we can help your organisation.

Speak to us today

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Find us here