



Customer Case Study

CNS Converts Ray Stone to Office 365
Over a Weekend





"Everything with CNS is easy. I don't worry about any IT issues at all. They've made my job so much easier. I feel like they've been an extension of my work family."

- Heather Howard, Systems Manager, Ray Stone, Inc.

► The Company

This year marks the historic fiftieth anniversary of Ray Stone Inc., a real estate investment management company headquartered in Sacramento. The company was founded in 1969 by developer Ray Stone, Jr., who remained involved with the business until he passed away in 2016. Through the years, the company remained committed to the community, supporting nonprofit organizations and participating in emergency food programs. Today, Ray Stone Inc. owns and manages apartment complexes, senior living communities and commercial properties in the Greater Sacramento Area, as well as throughout California, New Mexico and Texas. Ray Stone Inc. currently employs 165 end-users.

► The Problem

Heather Howard is the first to admit that she's not an information technology expert. That's why Howard, who was initially hired to work at Ray Stone Inc. as an accountant, was surprised when she found herself placed in charge of the company's IT support.

"Somehow the IT ended up on my desk," Howard says. "It's never been a strength for me, although I've always just made it happen."

Instead of focusing solely on audits and financial statements, Howard purchased and installed computers and managed support, handled software training and kept licenses up-to-date for over one hundred end-users spread across fifteen sites.

"It's not what I do, but somehow, I just kind of did it," she says.

► The Solution

Everything changed when Howard started outsourcing some of her IT duties to Capital Network Solutions. If Howard ran into an IT issue that she could not resolve, she suddenly had a highly trained support team watching her back.

"Once I started working with everybody on a daily basis, I just realized how knowledgeable they were," Howard says. "I can tell you that they saved me a lot of time and frustration. I've never had bad customer service."

Howard appreciated the reliable support and impeccable customer service that she found with CNS. Those qualities became especially important when Ray Stone Inc. required a major IT project: migrating the entire company to Office 365.

► The Process

The engineers at Capital Network Solutions have migrated dozens of businesses of all sizes to Office 365. Although the Ray Stone Inc. switchover was massive in scope, Hermle and the team at CNS made the process smooth and seamless for Howard.

“We discuss things in advance, and then we talk about how it’s going to work, and then that’s how it gets done,” Howard says. “Everything is pre-planned and spelled out. Everything is super easy.”

Hermle explains that despite the complexity and scope of the Ray Stone Inc. migration, the CNS process remains the same. “We’re pretty particular about it,” she says. “We have this process down step by step.”

Step 1: The Roadmap

The first step involves weeks of planning and preparation. “We access the existing infrastructure,” Hermle says. “We go through the specifics of their environment, and then we will come up with a roadmap.”

Step 2: The Cutover

To minimize business disruption, CNS performs the Office 365 migration on the weekend. The cutover starts on Friday when we remotely change the mail exchanger (MX) record to direct emails away from the old on-premises exchange and to the new virtual server instead.

Step 3: The Touch

On Saturday, CNS performs the onsite work, which gets dictated by the scope and details of the project. “We do the onsite work to make sure that it’s very seamless for the end-user,” Hermle says. “That is when we touch every computer to make sure that the entire profile, as well as all settings and customizations, are moved over.”

Step 4: The Remediation

Any necessary post-project remediation gets handled on Monday morning, although most issues involve end-user onboarding and education. “We have it pretty systematic at this point,” Hermle says. Most remediation gets handled offsite, although we will follow up on site if the project demands it.

► The Result

Hermle reports a high level of post-migration satisfaction among CNS clients. “We have very positive feedback for 365,” she says. By moving the email offsite, it remains available to businesses even in the case of a power outage or internet service interruption. “It’s advantageous because at least then you can communicate with your clients.”

As for Howard, how does she feel about Office 365? “CNS makes things so easy that I don’t even have to worry about it,” she says.