

Business Aspect Customer Story

Brisbane Catholic Education

Brisbane Catholic Education gains insight to improve supplier onboarding strategy



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Objective

Brisbane Catholic Education wanted expert analysis to determine the best approach to supplier onboarding.

Approach

Brisbane Catholic Education approached Business Aspect to conduct an options analysis of potential vendors for a supplier onboarding solution. The engagement was extended to review current and shortlisted contract management system vendors.

Solutions & Services

✔ Digital and ICT Advisory

Outcome

- Market scan of supplier onboarding systems vendors completed after rethink of software acquisition process
- Incumbent contract management system determined unfit for purpose
- Scope extended to incorporate full vendor management solution recommendations

Highlight

“I’m always impressed by the calibre of consultants and their ability to go away and research; they’re technical experts not necessarily just in that product they are looking at. Also, they understand business requirements, not only technical requirements.”

Boyd Bostock, Head of IT Systems and Platform Information Technology,
Brisbane Catholic Education.

Testimonial

“Our project team is very happy with the engagement and how it went. They felt it gave the direction they were seeking, where it was quite a difficult situation to work out the way forward.”

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The Background

Brisbane Catholic Education is a learning community responsible for more than 140 faith-based schools in south-east Queensland and combines tradition with modern education as it guides children from prep to grade 12 and prepares them for life beyond school.

Brisbane Catholic Education needed to update its supplier onboarding system and sought support from Business Aspect in the form of an option analysis, to guide them to the best suited solution.

The Challenge

Delivering education to the schools in the community requires working effectively with the many suppliers that provide essential goods and services. The suppliers range from niche businesses to major corporations, and ensuring everything runs smoothly with these relationships is a priority. For Brisbane Catholic Education Head of IT Systems and Platforms Information Technology, Boyd Bostock, it was clear that the supplier onboarding process is a critical part of the process, so when it came to replacing or updating the supplier onboarding system, the organisation wanted to make decisions based on solid intelligence.

“The reason for the project with Business Aspect was that we already had technology in that vendor management space, and the project was around supplier onboarding in its initial requirements.”

While Brisbane Catholic Education has skilled staff in-house, they operate in a busy environment and felt that Business Aspect could give the project what was needed to help make the best decision for their requirements.

“In the background, we were working on another project that strained our resources. With applications that fall outside the mainstream groups, such as supplier onboarding applications, it can be difficult to understand their offerings, capabilities, and limitations. Our approach is to ensure that everything is properly researched so that both immediate and future needs are met with the platform we choose. This was not an area where we had internal expertise at the level we required,” explained Bostock.

Since the incumbent supplier onboarding product had been implemented, technology had moved on. Brisbane Catholic Education was keen to select a tool to streamline and control the supplier onboarding system, lifting the burden of manual processes from busy staff and providing a smooth introduction for new suppliers. The product in place lacked the capacity to perform some of the functionality now available. Navigating the way forward would require expert advice.

“As we continued embedding an Enterprise Architecture discipline adoption of specific Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions, we saw an increase in the complexity of integration with more vendors to manage. An additional SaaS service within finance and not delivering an end-to-end capability was the trigger for engaging Business Aspect to look at the bigger picture,” Bostock said

“We already had a relationship with Business Aspect as we had been liaising for cyber security and data protection advisory. We were confident that their expertise would ensure we could deliver the best outcome possible.”

To begin, Business Aspect’s help was sought in performing an initial market scan, evaluating the existing supplier onboarding solution, and identifying the best path forward.

Brisbane Catholic Education

Business Outcome

Working with Brisbane Catholic Education to understand their needs, Business Aspect conducted an option analysis based on a market scan for supplier onboarding solutions. This gave an in-depth analysis of potential solutions, based on a defined list of functional and non-functional requirements. Analysts worked with vendors to provide demos based on a set of scenarios, and options were judged against criteria including value, ease of integration, and suitability for purpose.

“Business Aspect ran a series of workshops with our team and contacted both the incumbent vendor and potential vendors. They were able to gather more details from the vendors and arrange demos. Being able to engage with vendors directly, rather than relying solely on websites and Gartner reports, was valuable, and they had the relationships to do so. They then translated our business requirements into technical requirements, providing more useful insights,” detailed Bostock.

“The report was delivered in slide deck format in a presentation evaluating the current solution and a more detailed analysis that determined where it would deliver on requirements, and a market scan of other players in the market.”

That initial work validated Brisbane Catholic Education's caution around re-committing to the same product. This was followed by solution architecture design to give an in-depth look at how each possibility could work in their environment. The resulting report included scores against the core criteria, along with recommendations for a preferred vendor, and possible next steps.

“The initial market scan marked down the incumbent product on the contract management side. We then had to question about bringing in another technology into that area, so we asked ourselves, do we look at a technology that does both onboarding and contract management, and remove the incumbent?” said Bostock.

While supplier onboarding functionality was lacking, the incumbent product performed the contract management functions adequately, but Business Aspect analysts questioned whether it would make sense to introduce a separate technology. They challenged Brisbane Catholic Education to consider the wider implications.

“The product was doing the functions it needed in contract management, but it didn't make sense having a second product that required integration. We would end up with two products to manage throughout that vendor lifecycle.”

Rather than add complexity and management burden by introducing an additional product or stick with something that did not have the right functionality, Brisbane Catholic Education considered Business Aspect's input and veered away from its initial plan. Bostock said that the willingness of Business Aspect consultants to challenge Brisbane Catholic Education's thinking saved additional cost and complexity later.

“The number of systems we already support is challenging and to bring on more when we could replace with one product with a wider remit should always be considered,” explained Bostock.

“The outcome was that we decided to pause the project and look at a more holistic approach. The recommendation was to consider our requirements beyond the supplier onboarding project and view the vendor lifecycle, then find a product that meets not just current but future needs. This would lead to more cost efficiency down the track,” detailed Bostock.

“I view the decision to delay the project as a successful outcome as it gave us breathing space to think about the technology within finance as whole, the current situation, the immediate requirements and opportunities for future digitisation.”

Brisbane Catholic Education

Conclusion

Looking at projects in isolation does not always give the best outcome, and they knew the value of enlisting the help of consultants with the time and capability to perform a thorough investigation.

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The working relationship that Brisbane Catholic Education has with Business Aspect is one based on honest and open communication from both sides, and Bostock said that knowing the consultants are trained to look beyond the immediate is important.

“Our project team is very happy with the engagement and how it went. They felt it gave the direction they were seeking, where it was quite a difficult situation to work out the way forward.”

An additional benefit Brisbane Catholic Education identified was the access to more information from vendors, thanks to their pre-existing relationships with Business Aspect.

“It is an approach that is easier for vendors to respond to, rather than a formal RFI process which takes significant effort for vendors. There was not enough information in the public realm to understand the products, but by Business Aspect knowing the questions to ask, it enabled them to do a desktop analysis that helped guide our decisions.”

While it would have been possible to choose a product based on the market scan, Brisbane Catholic Education sees it as an advantage that Business Aspect challenged their thinking instead of taking the obvious path. Bostock said that the choice not to proceed immediately is the right outcome.

“This will most likely come through as a project next year with a wider remit than supplier onboarding. We are positioned to consider the wider requirements and pick a product suite that can meet our needs,” concluded Bostock.

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