



Sikich Scales its Office 365 Cloud Business with SkyKick Platform

“For us, it’s been all about how we can scale. With SkyKick, we can do migrations that we really couldn’t have done any other way. Because I don’t have to deploy resources to remote sites, I can sell, migrate, implement, and support Office 365 remotely with SkyKick. This has allowed us to have Office 365 clients in 30 states and 8 countries.” *Ken Klika, Partner*

The Challenge:

Office 365 migrations can be risky, time-consuming, and difficult to manage and scale. Before choosing the SkyKick platform for their Office 365 migrations, Sikich engineers would have to either send out help desk staff to client sites or send instructions for customers to follow. Because end users have varying levels of technical expertise, engaging them introduced additional risks and potential delays.

The Choice:

For many customers, a migration to Office 365 is their first entry point into the cloud. It is therefore vital that IT providers choose the right platform for the migration and other cloud services. SkyKick was chosen by Sikich to both address the risks and challenges of Office 365 migrations and to empower their cloud business to scale. Factors that contributed to the choice for SkyKick include:

- The ability to perform migrations 100% remotely.
- Multiple, automated syncs, before and after cutover.
- Comprehensive, scalable project management.
- The option to perform migrations without any end-user involvement.
- Unlimited, consultative support from pre-sales to post-cutover.

The Value:

The SkyKick platform has empowered Sikich to scale their Office 365 business through:

- Easy planning, scoping, and pricing that ensures profitability
- Accelerated migrations that maximize resources and reduce costs
- Effective project management that supports multiple simultaneous migrations
- SkyKick’s 100% focus on empowering cloud management for partners
- Additional projects based on successful Office 365 migrations



Sikich is a leading accounting, advisory, technology and managed services firm that delivers one-of-a-kind solutions to help clients realize their organizational goals. With 750+ employees in 14 offices, they rank as one of the country’s top 35 largest CPA firms.

Through June 2016, their Office 365 Practice had migrated over 300 customers and over 26,000 users in 30 states and 8 countries.

Website: Sikich.com

Country: United States

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Ken Klika, Partner

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Introduction

Sikich is a leading accounting, advisory, technology and managed services firm that delivers one-of-a-kind solutions to help clients realize their organizational goals. With 750+ employees in 14 offices, they rank as one of the country’s top 35 largest CPA firms.

In 2016, Sikich acquired BCG Systems, Inc. to expand their presence in the region and benefit from their technology solutions. Jim Drumm, partner-in-charge of technology services at Sikich, states, “[BCG’s] strength in cloud solutions and managed services will benefit our clients and add increased depth and capabilities to our already robust portfolio of technology solutions.”

One of BCG’s technology strengths was successfully migrating businesses to Office 365. Through June 2016, their Office 365 Practice had migrated over 300 customers and over 26,000 users in 30 states and 8 countries.

The Challenge

The value and success of Office 365 continues to drive demand for migrations. In addition to this incredible opportunity, every migration offers its own unique variables and challenges which can make migrations risky, time-consuming, and difficult to manage.

Complexities and risks

An entire migration project includes more than just moving data. From pre-sales,

project scoping, and pricing through cutover, there are multiple labor-intensive tasks and many unforeseen issues that may arise. Many of these require accurate timing and each introduces risk and can sidetrack a migration, requiring even more work and reducing customer satisfaction.

Challenges of end user involvement

Before using SkyKick for migrations to Office 365, the Office 365 Practice at BCG would have to either send out help desk staff to client sites or send instructions for customers to follow. Because end users have varying levels of technical expertise, engaging them introduced risks and potential delays.

As more and more end users work remotely, this challenge becomes even more heightened. Ken Klika, Partner, states, “It was extraordinarily time consuming to either visit remote workers or set up remote sessions to log in. That’s a lot of labor, a lot of cost to them, and a cost to us.”

Having to visit sites or engage end users to perform technical steps also seriously limited the number and geography of the migrations they could perform.

The Choice

The Outlook Assistant

Initially, the Office 365 Practice converted to SkyKick from other migration tools to take advantage of the Outlook Assistant. The Outlook Assistant performs desktop readiness and remediation, configures Outlook to work with Office 365, moves local

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*Dominic Irrcher,
Senior Network Consultant*

data as required, and recreates the user’s previous Outlook experience as closely as possible post-migration. Klika states, “This is perhaps the biggest benefit of using the SkyKick solution. Without a tool like this we would be unable to perform a cutover without an army of resources.”

Migration Sync

Data Sync Process

Unlike other tools, SkyKick automates the data sync process, performing multiple initial syncs before cutover, as well as final syncs after cutover which ensure every piece of data and even last-minute mailbox changes are captured. Dominic Irrcher, Senior Network Consultant, states, “The sync capability is part of what sets the SkyKick solution apart from competitors. Other solutions typically offer a one-time historical sync and then a final sync. If data is re-organized at the source, that work is not captured.” Irrcher continues, “SkyKick also provides multiple ways to increase/decrease transfer rates to satisfy client business needs and not disrupt operations.”

Cutover v Hybrid

Some partners and customers feel the only way to address or minimize the risks of a migration is to perform a hybrid migration. Klika states, “We were never fans of the hybrid model because of the inherent challenges around free-busy schedule, calendar problems, and users not being able to see each other’s calendars. It’s just not a great user experience. It may give some internal people the illusion of

less risk, but at the expense of potentially causing challenges for people simply trying to schedule a meeting.”

Klika concludes, “For us, we’ve always tried to avoid hybrid migrations when we can, and SkyKick enables us to do a cutover migration for even a large, complex customer environment. This helps us provide our customers with the best user experience.”

Migration Tracker

The Migration Tracker provides partners with complete visibility and control of the entire migration process. When multiple projects are run either by multiple or a single project manager, the tracker allows managers to provide timely and accurate status reports to clients.

Irrcher states, “At any moment, we can see exactly how far we are in the process, including which users haven’t connected, what mail hasn’t yet migrated, and who we need to track down to get them to get their machine online. That visibility enables us to ensure a seamless cutover with the fewest disruptions to end users as possible.”

Klika adds, “We shoot for a very low rate of any kind of support incidence, and the SkyKick tool helps us do that. Usually, post migration we only need to spend a couple of hours cleaning up any loose ends, and the Migration Tracker helps the process go very efficiently and effectively.” Klika emphasizes, “That makes the executives who hired us to do these projects very happy.”

“The [SkyKick] Support engineers are very good at understanding the needs and complexities of every migration. It is not uncommon for us to contact support during the early planning phases of a complex migration to walk through the scenario and confirm we have everything covered and are ready to proceed.”

Ken Klika, Partner

The Hands-Free Migration Option

In 2015, SkyKick released the ability to perform Hands-Free Migrations. These require more upfront work by partners to set-up, configure, and manage, but offer the benefit of eliminating end user involvement in the migration process.

Klika states, “We perform Hands-Free Migrations whenever possible. The value of this option grows exponentially with the size of a migration. Every end user action that is eliminated reduces the cost, risk, and management complexity of the migration.” He continues, “This was especially true for a recent 759-user migration. Because there were no delays due to end users, we not only delivered a seamless migration experience, we significantly reduced the duration of the project.”

End User Communications

While the Office 365 Practice performs Hands-Free Migrations as often as possible, they perform many migrations which require end user involvement. In these cases, the automated communication options ensure that end users get easy-to-follow instructions in a timely manner. Klika states, “Our clients consistently give us very high marks in terms of satisfaction around communication, and that’s certainly related to what we do with SkyKick.”

Support

Unlike other migration tools, SkyKick offers free, unlimited support across an entire migration process. Klika states,

“The Support engineers are very good at understanding the needs and complexities of every migration. It is not uncommon for us to contact support during the early planning phases of a complex migration to walk through the scenario and confirm we have everything covered and are ready to proceed.” He continues, “It’s that relationship that gives us the ability to give assurances to our clients that we are taking the right approach for a successful migration.”

The Value

Easy Planning, Scoping, and Pricing

Klika states, “We do each of our projects for a fixed fee, so it’s really important to get that correct up front. The Migration Planner helps us communicate with customers exactly what the fee is based on. This is critical because if we discover something different down the road, we have to be able to explain why we have to adjust our fee.”

One example of this was a migration which required a fee increase of over 30%. In spite of the large change, it was clearly explained to and understood by the customer, based on what was uncovered in the source email environment by the discovery services in the Migration Planner.

Streamlined Migrations

Even complex email environments can be migrated efficiently with SkyKick technology. Klika recalls, “One of our clients had multiple Exchange environments, which led us to believe we would have to do a hybrid migration. But because we were able to

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leverage SkyKick’s migration tool, we were able to perform a cutover migration and avoid all of the complexities and downsides of a hybrid migration. It also saved us roughly 30 hours on the project.”

Effectively Manage

The Migration Tracker empowers partners to effectively manage migrations at scale. Klika states, “With SkyKick we can assign one person to manage multiple migration projects. That’s been the key.”

The Migration Tracker also helps with timing the cutover, setting client expectations, having the right staff available for any post migration support, letting users know what is happening. Klika emphasizes, “All that starts with the visibility we get using the Migration Tracker. We always know where things stand and have complete control over the timing of the cutover.”

Strong Partnership

As a to-partner only business, everything SkyKick does is designed to empower cloud management for partners. Klika emphasizes, “Certainly the technology delivers what is promised, but more importantly, SkyKick listens to us as a partner. That’s far and away the most valuable thing when we’re going to market together effectively.” He continues, “We’re in business together to provide solutions to our customers, and the fact that I can reach out to account managers or the technical team at any time is why I am so pro-SkyKick and I think it’s been critical to our success.”

SkyKick products are built on partner input and feedback. Klika states, “Before the merger with Sikich, BCG was a small company. So the fact that SkyKick was eager to listen to us, take our feedback, and value it, legitimizes the value of why someone would choose SkyKick over any other solution out there.

A key component of any partnership with SkyKick is the technical support. Irrcher emphasizes, “The time SkyKick saves us on migrations is well worth the cost. But the support staff is what provides the most value. Each support engineer is engaged and follows through any issues to resolution.”

Profitability

Klika states, “For us, it’s been all about how we can scale. Today, because of SkyKick, we can do migrations that we really couldn’t have done any other way. Because I don’t have to deploy resources to remote sites, I can sell, migrate, implement, and support Office 365 completely remotely with SkyKick. This has allowed us to have Office 365 clients in 30 states and 8 countries.”

He continues, “Not visiting desktops also reduces the cost and time of a migration and allows us to migrate large organizations more efficiently. When I can go to a prospect that has 500 users and say, ‘We don’t need to go to your desktops.’ Their eyes get big. They’re so excited knowing that we can do it behind the scenes with SkyKick.”

More than Migrations

SkyKick offers its technology to partners

only, and their primary goal is to enable IT partners to effectively manage and scale their cloud business. Klika states, “By empowering more simultaneous migrations, we have scaled our business more cost effectively, and delivering smooth migrations and building client satisfaction and confidence with SkyKick often leads to us being re-engaged for other projects. It’s lead to managed service opportunities, ERP opportunities, and a variety of other projects. We see migrating companies to Office 365 with SkyKick as the gateway for us to add new project or managed service clients; it’s that important to our business.”

By combining the resources and customer reach of Sikich with the Office 365 Practice from BCG, the company expects their Office 365 migration practice to scale even faster, and to provide even more opportunities to expand technology solutions for their customers.

Klika concludes, “If anyone were to come to me and ask, ‘How can I have a successful Office 365 practice?’ I would say, ‘Partner with SkyKick.’”