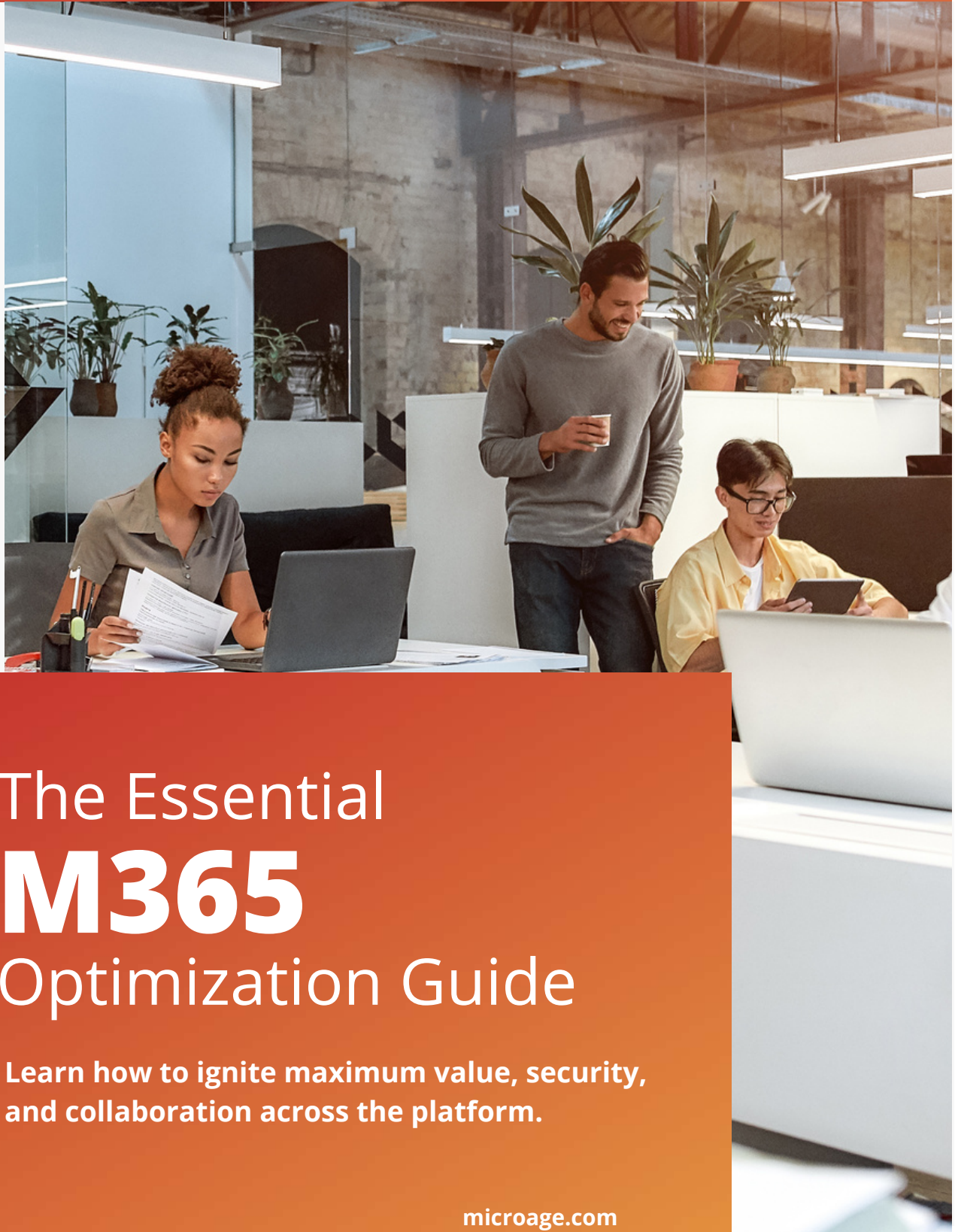




The Digital Transformation Experts



The Essential **M365** Optimization Guide

Learn how to ignite maximum value, security,
and collaboration across the platform.

microage.com

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Fuel smarter business outcomes and connect your workforce with MicroAge.



MicroAge has been awarded:
🏆 Top MSP 500 - Elite 150
🏆 Top Tech Elite 250
🏆 Top Solution Provider 500



Most organizations using M365 still aren't right-sizing their environment or tapping into all the out-of-box capabilities to maximize value and performance.

Over half of all businesses use the platform for their collaboration and productivity needs. In fact, in the last year, 70% of Fortune 500s have made Microsoft 365® purchases and users for the platform grew more than 21% last year. 61% of organizations with 50 employees or less are using Microsoft 365 along with 24% of all medium businesses.

With the explosive growth, we're seeing on the Microsoft 365 platform (accumulating around 3 million new users each month), what is surprising is how few organizations have secured or optimized their investment.

With the remote workforce, optimizing and protecting your cloud investment has never been more critical to keeping your business members and customers connected.

Optimizing your Microsoft 365 environment can help your organization prevent outages by quickly mitigating risks upfront to ensure availability of cloud-based workloads while securing data and apps from security threats, accidental deletion, and policy gaps. It's also mission-critical to meeting compliance—both legal and industry requirements—using efficient eDiscovery of backup archives to keep your business in the clear. All while helping to drive maximum value with a right-sized environment.

Optimize and protect your M365 environment.

While Microsoft 365 is known for a whole host of best-in-class applications, (more on that in a minute), *backup isn't one of them*. Keeping your Microsoft 365 data available is more critical than ever in our disparate, connected workplace. That's why it's so crucial to evaluate an extra layer of backup as part of your Microsoft 365 approach.

Using a third-party backup solution can help you prevent unnecessary disruptions and outages while keeping your Microsoft 365 data and applications readily available. So you can protect your data from security threats, accidental deletion, and hidden policy gaps and support legal and compliance requirements.

A robust, third-party backup solution also enables your organization to simplify continuity from the data center to the cloud while extending ample availability to virtual, physical, and cloud-based workloads.

Leveraging a dedicated backup solution for your Microsoft 365 environment also helps to reduce costs and avoid unpredictable, fluctuating expenses by moving data to Azure. But backup isn't the only mission-critical caveat for your Microsoft 365 environment that isn't included with your out-of-the-box setup.

Another must for empowering business continuity and a safe, productive remote workforce in a Microsoft 365 environment is investing in security. **The baseline security incorporated into the suite isn't enough to adequately arm your organization from the growing cybersecurity threats, with attacks spiking 400% last year alone.**

It's a given that securing your organization's perimeter with Firewall and Web Security aren't just good best practices, but necessary basics for any organization. Leveraging email security and continuity can help prevent malware and phishing attacks, and endpoint security is vital to protecting your organization from evolving malware security threats. All of this is possible with the right third-party Microsoft 365 cloud security to promote simple, cloud-based managed, and interconnected functionality with Cloud Security.

“

Microsoft takes care of the infrastructure, but the data remains your responsibility.

”

Know the make-or-break differences between archiving and backup.

Backup or archive, what's the difference and why is it so important for Microsoft 365 environments? These questions keep coming up because these terms are used so interchangeably. Knowing and understanding the difference is mission-critical when it comes to aligning your data storage methodology and goals.



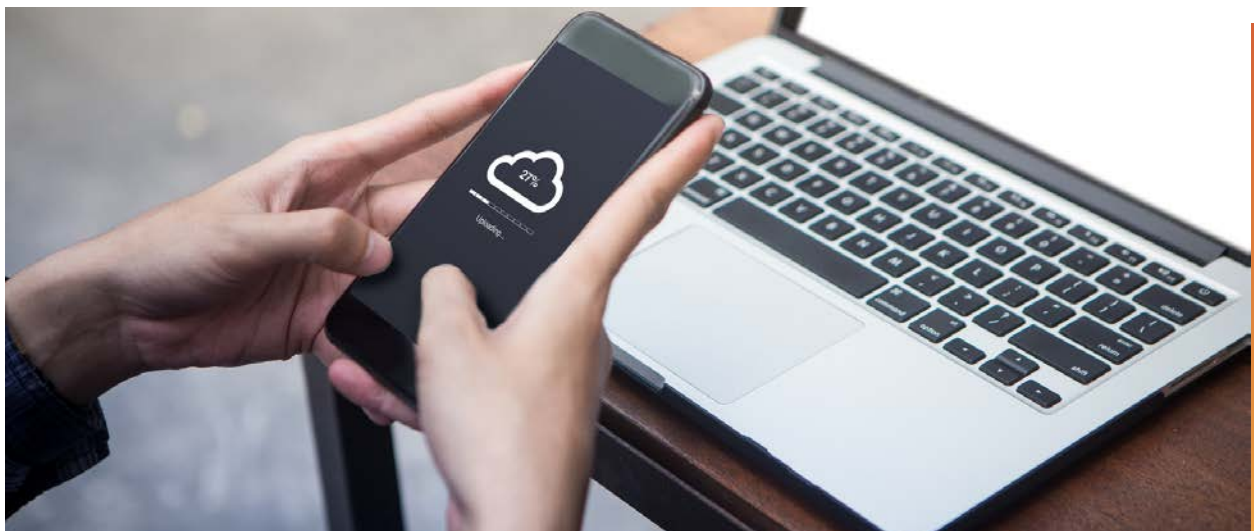
Archiving or "Putting it on Ice"

Data archiving is the long-term process of storing and retaining data. Data that's archived often isn't currently in use, but it can be restored in the future as needed. For example, your organization probably keeps an active archive of dated email interchanges handy in case of organizational shifts, changes in personnel, or fresh legal matters. It's a lot like putting your not-so-relevant data on ice in case it becomes relevant later.



Calling for Backup

Data backup on the other hand is defined as the process of duplicating data for retrieval in case of a data loss event. Backing up data makes a second set of all your files (current and dated) so you can restore them later in the event of a natural disaster or cyber-attack. Everyone needs a backup, that's especially true for any organization because of the value of data. After all, in recent years data's worth surpassed that of oil.



Gain clarity to protect your M365 environment and investment.

Here are some of the main differences between backing up and archiving on M365 in a way that's easy to understand.

Preservation isn't recovery

Archiving and backing up data have very different purposes and capabilities. The most important distinction is that archiving is dedicated to long-term data preservation and retention while backup is all about recovery in the event of an emergency. Archiving preserves the files you want to keep on hand while backing up protects your business so you can restore everything.

Access levels are different

Because they serve different technical functions, backup and archive applications offer different levels of user access. Archives are built to put those individual files like word documents, databases, and email messages on ice so they're easy to locate later. When files are archived, their metadata is also, making it easy to find that email Bob sent you about best practices two years after his retirement party. Archives aren't meant to be used for a total recovery.

Meanwhile, backup data is generally there for backup in case you need a large-scale recovery later. Backup applications are used for data objects and individual files, but they're intended for significant recovery efforts—recovering files, systems and applications.





Disaster recovery is key.

You're probably noticing a trend when it comes to what makes backup so different—it's all about preparing for disaster recovery. That's because backup is integral to Disaster Recovery (DR). When you're backing information up, you're protecting that data offsite—usually on the Cloud—in case of a disaster. Archiving maintains your archive system, but it won't save your data in the event of an emergency.

That's important to remember because the number of annual ransomware attacks doubled this year. These attacks have been costing businesses and even local city governments millions to retrieve stolen data from hackers or rebuild their systems. That's where Microsoft 365 environments come in when talking data backup and protection.

Backup locally and on the cloud.

Backing up your M365 data and system can prevent damages that you cannot recover from and can keep you from getting trapped paying a ransom in the future. And even if you're keeping an active archive of your data and files in place already, that's not enough. Backup is mission-critical to disaster recovery of any kind—especially after a natural disaster or a cyberattack—because archives help with preservation, not recovery.

In the event of a ransomware cyberattack, restoring your files from a secure backup is the fastest way to regain access to your data, applications, and systems. Cloud backup solutions are ideal for protecting your data, so it isn't infected by ransomware. This backup is an extra layer of production every organization needs.



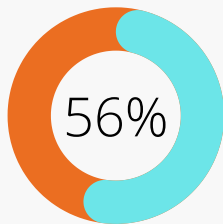
Why is backup so important for Microsoft 365?

Over 3 million businesses are added to Microsoft office every month and to Microsoft's credit, Microsoft 365 comes with a vast array of best-in-class solutions. However, a comprehensive backup of your data isn't one of them. You can save your organization thousands (or millions) of dollars by investing in additional layers as part of your Microsoft 365 strategy. Having the right backup approach can protect your data from security threats, accidental deletion, and policy gaps. Backing up your Microsoft 365 environment also makes quickly restoring individual items or entire applications simple with recovery flexibility.

Unleash hidden value with license optimization and stop overpaying for Microsoft 365.

The Microsoft 365 platform growth was first ignited with a large portion of organizations migrating to the cloud since Microsoft launched the flagship SaaS productivity suite a decade ago. These large migrations empowering the platform's rapid growth are the perfect use case in why IT leaders need to understand and manage Microsoft 365 licenses effectively to avoid overspending by over licensing.

Why is over licensing so abundant? Well to start with, the Microsoft 365 purchasing process can be a complicated one with all the active players involved—including IT, purchasing managers, procurement, and of course whoever is selling you the licenses. And while each group is looking for a speedy deployment, they all have a set of different and sometimes competing goals, requirements, and priorities—making it easy to over-purchase licenses while zipping through a complex and time-consuming IT project.



The number of Office 365 licenses that are not fully utilized because they are unassigned, unused, over-sized or underutilized.

That's why partnering with the right managed services provider can help. A good cloud services provider can save you time and alleviate unnecessary spend by helping you tap into advanced reporting and analytics for a deeper, fuller view into your Microsoft 365 environment. With a complete breakdown of your IT investment, you can easily pinpoint potential gaps and redundancies to keep the focus on agility and value.



The average business could reduce their total Office 365 costs by 48% by improving how they purchase and manage their Office 365 licenses.



Microsoft licensing is complicated.



The combination of the growing number of businesses fully migrating to Microsoft 365, the gradual retirement of legacy licensing programs (Open License), and more rigid qualification requirements for Enterprise Agreements (EA) make flexible, monthly consumption of Microsoft seem like an intuitive approach. Whether billed through Microsoft directly or through a CSP (Cloud Solutions Provider), clients can use and pay only for what they need. **While monthly consumption models are marketed for their flexibility, it isn't always easy to maintain and maximize value.**

Most organizations are unknowingly overspending due to overprovisioning license counts. Meanwhile, the majority of M365 users still aren't delivering the full return on investment by maximizing the value of the productivity suite and available capabilities. They need to be educated on using M365 features or moved to a more cost-effective, simplified plan.

Also, many IT leaders are not aware that alternative plans include cutting-edge Microsoft tech, and can often be provisioned at the same cost as their existing plan with fewer capabilities.



That's why we break down four ways to understand licensing in this eBook.



01

Don't try to go it alone.

Self-educating on Microsoft licensing and the nuances between products is a growing time and productivity killer for IT teams and leaders across industries. That's because it's a lot to understand without outside knowledge and support. Currently, Microsoft has 16 M65 plans available, all with similar names. But all of them serve different use cases and as such are priced differently.

Working with a Microsoft partner fluent in the plans and how each aligns with your unique business needs, goals, and bottom line saves you time. It also prevents headaches while usually lowering your spend significantly so you can invest that in other areas—like digital transformation. The ability to ask questions and receive swift, smart answers from outside experts is a gamechanger for most organizations. A good CSP partner will have dedicated cloud specialists on hand for quick responses on license inquiries.

02

Assess and optimize quarterly.

Working with a CSP partner that is standardized on engaging with clients quarterly for the sole purpose of licensing recommendations can help to prevent license sprawl—actively saving your resources and maximizing your M365 investment. These quarterly evaluations are a smart approach to leveraging the benefit of cost savings in a flexible monthly program. Quarterly assessments also allow you to leverage free value-added services offered through most CSPs.

A good CSP partner provides education, reporting, and analytics above and beyond what is already available in the M365 Admin Center.



03

Plan ahead.

Now is the perfect time to uncover potential business transformation opportunities that lie ahead. If you want a roadmap to a “cloud-first” strategy for your business, it starts with an informative license discussion. That requires a CSP that is laser-focused on essential security products like MFA (multi-factor authentication, Conditional Access, Self-service password reset, and Single Sign-on (SSO) included in Azure Active Directory P1 and P2 plans in addition to device management and zero-touch deployment for windows devices available in Microsoft Endpoint Manager (Intune and Autopilot).

04

Stress test your CSP.

Usually, a CSP is also your MSP (Managed Services Provider), making it imperative to ensure the CSP teams are both certified and accessible. This vetted knowledge and accessibility are essential for license proficiency and the technical expertise to deploy and support the products that your Microsoft licensing can unlock.

If you are interested in Microsoft Endpoint Manager (formerly Intune), your CSP can provide you with the licenses, but can they support it? Leveraging your CSP/MSP for maximum value is the best thing you can do for your business.

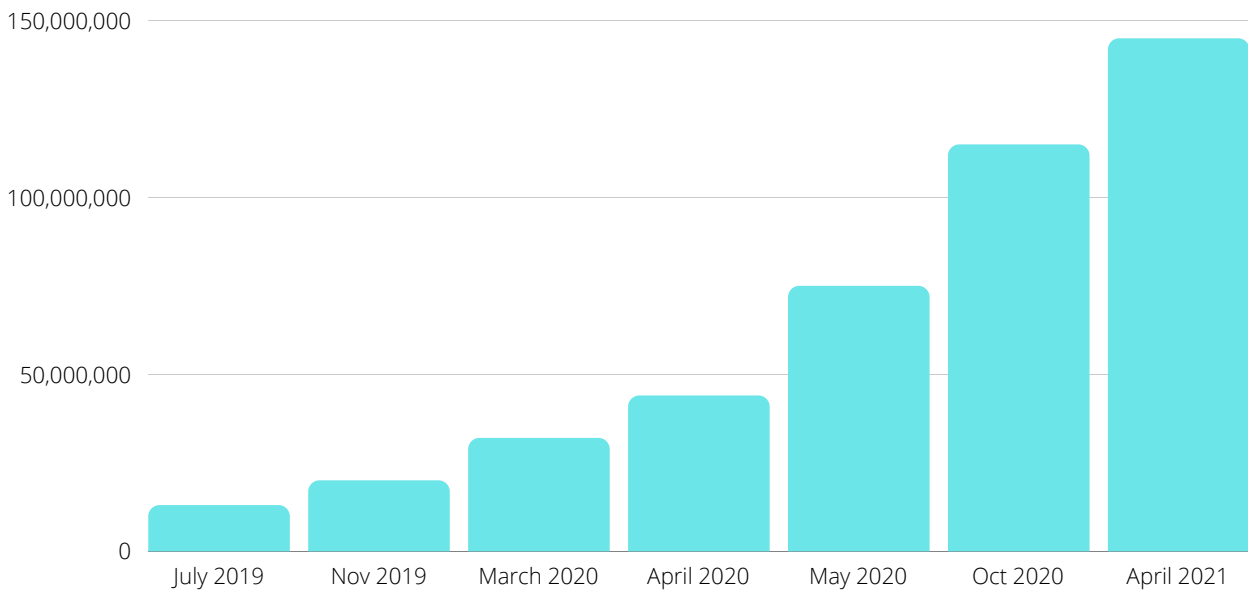
The number one reason MicroAge is onboarding new CSP clients at an accelerated rate is that they realized their current CSP/MSP failed to support them during a challenging time. A more basic item of consideration is license provisioning. If it takes your CSP longer than 24 hours to get a license provisioned or removed from your tenant, there is a problem.

Fuel more meaningful collaboration with Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Teams helps make every hour and meeting count. The leading collaboration platform is used by over 44 million users every day and for good reason. Microsoft Teams is a secure platform that adds new productivity and collaboration hacks for your connected workforce on a regular basis.

Pre-pandemic in 2019, Microsoft Teams was at 20 million daily users. In April 2021, Microsoft Teams reached 145 million. A lot of quick decisions were necessary in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a fast shift in the way we work. The rapid adoption of Microsoft Teams and other collaboration platforms is part of the movement forward that changed both the work and technology cultures forever.

Microsoft Teams Users Over Time



Keep in mind that Microsoft is known for its constant updates. So, don't get frustrated if the button you click on every day in Teams gets moved. Many of these new changes are not about making things more complicated but making room for more innovative products to be incorporated into the app. That's why having a CSP that can offer insights and training on the latest Microsoft Teams capabilities and how to apply them to your workforce is so important to driving constant collaboration and unparalleled productivity levels.

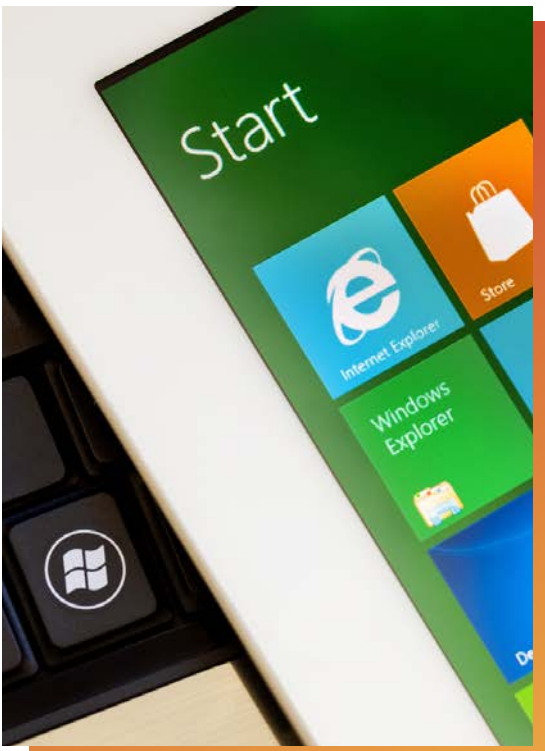
Ensure you are leveraging all the M365 capabilities available with your plan.

Once you've optimized, backed up, and secured your Microsoft 365 environment, it's important to be able to navigate it fully while harnessing your capabilities to the fullest potential. Your IT team members are the experts on how technology applies to your business.

Learning and understanding every layer and capability of your Microsoft 365 platform can be a time-consuming and almost byzantine task to achieve on top of the regular day-to-day responsibilities that keep your business secure and in motion.

That's why it's so helpful to bring in Microsoft 365 experts to give your IT leaders and stakeholders the complete rundown and ensure no capabilities (that you're already paying for each month) are left behind.

Having outside expertise helps to quickly elevate your team's acumen and approach on the platform while saving them hours (and hours) of research and testing that can be cutting into your user experience, innovation, and bottom line.



Rediscover Microsoft 365

Secure and connect your workforce with team members, resources, and the information they need to drive collaboration and power productivity with a trusted Cloud Services Provider (CSP)—all on a powerful, best-in-class Microsoft 365 cloud environment. Our Microsoft specialists optimize and protect your environment. **Connect with our cloud experts today—call 800-544-8877 or visit MicroAge.com.**

What's the MicroAge difference?

MicroAge combines a powerful mix of technology services backed by vendor-certified engineers and an acclaimed panel of experts to deliver the competitive edge technology leaders need to lead in a disruptive, digital environment.