

Barhead develops groundbreaking Return to Office app leveraging Microsoft Power Platform and Teams.

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Preserving employee safety and employer security by using Microsoft Power Platform technologies.

Sydney – 09, June 2020. Australian business software specialist Barhead has unveiled a groundbreaking workforce management application that will help companies ensure the safe and efficient return of employees to the workplace as COVID-19 restrictions begin to lift.

Built using Microsoft's Power Platform and integrating with other modern workplace solutions including Microsoft Teams Barhead's Return to Office app provides employees with a streamlined way to connect to the workplace, to book workspaces, meeting rooms, general office spaces or schedule work from home periods, and alert employers to their current location and future plans.

This system, developed with security front and centre, ensures employers have complete transparency regarding where their staff are working, and who they have been in contact with. The application leverages the tenants' Common Data Service (CDS) and internal Human Capital Management (HCM) data to ensure compliant and secure use of data.

Fully integrated with existing business systems, the Return to Office app helps streamline the way in which meeting rooms and office space can be reserved. The app can also be used to help schedule any necessary workflows such as deep cleaning before a meeting room or desk is used by the next person or group.

According to Barhead founder John Orrock; "The way an organisation needs to engage with its clients, engage with its employees, industry partners, and so forth, will change, for the foreseeable future." He added that the Return to Office app would support the wellbeing of employees as they return to the office and deliver rich real time insights to the enterprise to help mitigate risk around issues such as insurance and workers health and safety.

Barhead's experience as a leading business applications services provider that leverages the entire Microsoft stack has allowed it to integrate the Return to Office app with key data flows in other workplace applications for example to ServiceNow, IBM Maximo or SAP and deliver the insights organisations need to be efficient and effective as they return to the new normal.

Rachel Bondi, Chief Partner Officer, Microsoft Australia congratulated Barhead for its foresight in developing the Return to Office app. "We are seeing most of Australia's enterprises now focusing on activating the recovery phase of their COVID-19 business continuity plans. This richly featured and highly relevant Return to Office app is exactly what businesses need to allow their employees to safely return to work – whether that is in the office or at home - with no compromise of safety or productivity.

"Barhead has an exceptional understanding of the Microsoft stack; this enables it rapidly to build highly innovative solutions like the Return to Office app that respond to customer needs swiftly and effectively."

Developed using the Microsoft Power Platform over a period of just seven days, the Return to Office app also leverages an Azure based bot which can check people in and out based on their Microsoft Teams activity or prompt them to check in manually to specify where they are working that day, including any periods of time when they plan to work from home.

There is pre-built integration to Barhead's Workforce Management App along with ready to use integrations to common IoT sensors and networks. The Return to Office app has also been developed to be able to incorporate solutions such as people counting, health stations for temperature checks and facial recognition, as well as access control, ID scanners and desk check-ins.

Employees can use the app's reservation engine to make a room booking or select an in-office location to work for either a couple of hours, a day or more extended periods. Because the app integrates with other Microsoft business systems such as Dynamics 365 and Teams the reservation engine can show users availability and accessibility of meeting rooms, offices – even different desk and technology formats such as standing desks or double screen availability.

The app is also automatically updated with details of any holidays that an employee might have booked.

All of the information collected via the app is transparent and made available securely in real time to the employer's existing business systems – which also benefit from the app's track and trace functionality. If an incident occurs, the employer has instant access to information about location, and can trigger a workflow for a cleaner to be deployed or alert any other people who might need to be notified.

Orrock noted that being cloud based allowed the Return to Office app to scale rapidly, adding that the low-code nature of the Power Platform also ensured that any changes required by either Government or company rules could be easily accommodated making the app highly versatile and responsive whatever the new normal looks like in the post COVID-19 era.

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