

Hollywood Bowl Secures Expanding Network with Unified, 24/7 Protection

The UK's largest tenpin bowling operator, Hollywood Bowl, partnered with Softwerx to adopt a Microsoft-first security strategy, gaining unified visibility, stronger threat response and ongoing protection.

Hollywood Bowl: market-leading family entertainment

Hollywood Bowl is a market-leading international leisure operator specialising in tenpin bowling. Following its 2022 acquisition of Canadian entertainment centre Splitsville, the group now operates 80 centres in the UK and 12 in Canada, making it one of the world's largest and the UK's biggest. The company is committed to delivering inclusive, enjoyable experiences that bring people of all ages and abilities together.

When expansion outpaces IT security

As with any growing businesses, Hollywood Bowl's international expansion brought organisational challenges. The acquisition of Splitsville introduced a complex mix of legacy systems, siloed IT infrastructure and an increasingly distributed network footprint.

Dan Burborough, who joined as Head of IT Security shortly after the acquisition, was tasked with securing this larger and more complex environment without a corresponding increase in headcount and resources. He quickly recognised that the existing, fragmented approach carried higher risk of exposure, reduced efficiency and rising costs. At its core, the issue was one of risk management and business continuity – ensuring the organisation could continue to operate securely and without disruption.

"We were relying on a patchwork of independent solutions that didn't easily talk to each other," says Dan. "Manual patching and third-party support created inefficiencies and left us exposed to vulnerabilities. Without unified visibility or control, we couldn't confidently verify the security or integrity of our own environment. The question became clear – should we keep stitching solutions together?"

At the same time, the cyber threat landscape was evolving rapidly. From ransomware to sophisticated phishing campaigns, the risks to operational continuity and customer data were escalating. Expansion across multiple time zones made the situation even more complex, creating the need for continuous, round-the-clock monitoring that the existing model could not deliver.



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"Every time a new bowling centre comes on board, that's a new slice of the network. New endpoints, new cloud services and more team members. The attack surface increases all the time and threats are constantly evolving," says Dan. "You can't protect what you can't detect. Essentially, we had lost control. We needed eyes-on everything, in real-time to protect our systems around the clock."

That loss of control, he explains, points to a wider truth every organisation faces: "Every business ultimately faces the same challenge. Business continuity. We all need to continue trading."

A strategic shift to unified security and 24/7 protection

The company chose to adopt a Microsoft-first security strategy, which aligned with its broader digital transformation objectives.

"As a self-proclaimed Microsoft fanboy, I saw clear advantages in moving away from isolated solutions and consolidating within the Microsoft ecosystem," says Dan. "Microsoft provides the most comprehensive data visibility, with a single pane of glass. My strategy was straightforward: leverage Microsoft's continuous innovation, follow the roadmap and build on a platform we can trust."

Hollywood Bowl partnered with Softwerx to lead the transformation. The engagement began with a licensing review to ensure full value was being extracted from existing Microsoft investments. From there, the company implemented Softwerx's secure365® solution, gaining UK-based 24/7 MDR support through a dedicated Security Operations Centre (SOC). The SOC monitors, detects and responds to threats in real time, providing proactive protection and rapid incident containment.

"What stood out about Softwerx was their focus on threats and opportunities, not SKUs. They acted as a risk-reduction partner rather than a reseller, which delivered early wins and, more importantly, established trust from the outset," says Dan.

A fully integrated Microsoft ecosystem was deployed, including Defender for Endpoint, Entra ID, Sentinel, Defender for Cloud Apps and Microsoft Purview. This unified platform allows telemetry from identities, devices, data, cloud and infrastructure to flow into Microsoft Defender and Sentinel, ensuring threats are detected, correlated and contained efficiently.

Unlocking security, simplicity and strategic value

By consolidating security operations into the Microsoft ecosystem, Hollywood Bowl has transformed how it identifies, prioritises and responds to risk. The business now has full alignment across compliance, security and productivity within a single, integrated platform.

Security teams benefit from greater visibility and operational simplicity, with telemetry from across the environment feeding into a unified view with true storytelling of an attack. This eliminates blind spots and enables faster, more informed decision-making.

"What makes the difference is having that single pane of glass. Detection and response are all in one place. I like to think of Microsoft Security as a Swiss Army Knife – Defender for Endpoint, Entra ID, Conditional Access and Sentinel are the blades, ready to be used," says Dan. "By partnering with Softwerx we've been able to make our security tools work more efficiently in an ecosystem that we can control around the clock."

This shift has also reframed how the Hollywood Bowl board views security investment. Rather than being seen as a cost, it is now recognised as a strategic move to reduce risk. By maximising existing Microsoft licences, the company has unlocked greater value while streamlining operations and strengthening its threat response.

"We can now contain threats before a SOC analyst even needs to get involved," says Dan. "I trust the telemetry and let Microsoft do the heavy lifting, all while maximising the full value of the licences we already own. It's not just about detection, it's about identifying risks, quantifying them and making informed decisions on how best to mitigate them."

Looking ahead on the Microsoft roadmap

Looking ahead, Hollywood Bowl will continue its journey with Softwerx, following the Microsoft roadmap to unlock further value. Priorities include leveraging Purview for deeper data insights, strengthening Data Loss Prevention and enhancing eDiscovery. The focus remains on maximising existing investments and ensuring the expanding business gains the full benefit of the security tools already in place.

"Security is a heartbeat. A continuous evolution. And we fully intend to evolve with Microsoft," says Dan.

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Your roadmap to resilience:

Take the next step with Softwerx

At Softwerx, we empower mid-market organisations to unlock the full potential of Microsoft Security.

Through expert consultancy, strategic guidance and hands-on support, we help businesses optimise their Microsoft infrastructure, security posture and licensing. Our UK-based 24/7 Security Operations Centre (SOC), alongside our flagship Managed Detection and Response (MDR) service, secure365®, leverages Microsoft 365 Defender and Microsoft Sentinel to deliver real-time threat detection, rapid incident response and intelligent security event management.

We make enterprise-grade cybersecurity both **accessible and affordable** — tailored specifically for the needs of security-conscious mid-market organisations.

Our approach guides you on a clear, tailored security journey — from initial audit to actionable outcomes — all shaped around your business's unique needs. Powered by Microsoft technologies and enriched by deep domain expertise, we take you through a structured process of discovery, assessment and expert advisory.

We transform insight into measurable impact — helping you build a resilient, future-ready security posture with confidence, clarity and the ability to protect what matters most while driving innovation forward.

Get in touch to explore how Softwerx can help secure and strengthen your business.

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