Construction giant shifts to Microsoft Azure with help from Bytes

Company profile

Industry: Construction   Turnover: £1.3bn

WILLMOTT DIXON
SINCE 1852

Overview

Willmott Dixon are a leading UK construction company at the forefront of sustainable construction - being one of the first in the industry to achieve the Carbon Trust Standard accreditation. Recent high-profile projects include refurbishing the National Gallery and building the College for High Speed Rail.

Challenge

Willmott Dixon managed most of their infrastructure in-house, but were using a third-party on-premise data centre for backup and DR strategy. The contract with this data centre was nearing expiry which sparked an internal discussion about alternatives to on-premise.

The solution needed to have:

- An environment suitable for testing and development
- Reduced capital expenditure (e.g. servers to house, rent, cooling, compute)
- Increased agility and visibility with improved infrastructure management

Solution

Bytes went through the benefits of Microsoft Azure, a cloud platform offering ease of use, peace of mind and cost-effectiveness. Moving to the cloud would reduce the unnecessary costs of

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Moving to the cloud has allowed us to free up engineers from worrying about resource limitations, air conditioning units and fire suppression systems and now they are able to provide new services to our customers quickly and easily. Our software development teams have greater control over what they do, can experiment more and can scale. Our enterprise architects can help us leverage new technologies quickly too. All this means we can be more responsive and flexible for our customers.

Gareth J Davies | Head of Technology Services | Willmott Dixon

housing a physical data centre. It would also provide a stable environment for developers, in addition to boosting visibility, agility and management. Azure simply ticked all the boxes.

To make the migration cost-effective, Willmott Dixon also needed expert guidance to determine the right Microsoft licensing agreement. They were using a Microsoft Products and Services Agreement (MPSA) for on-premise server licenses. Bytes got to work providing cost models for replacing this with cloud instances. Willmott Dixon chose Microsoft's Cloud Solution Provider (CSP) model, as costs would organically grow when instances were created, and it has no need for an upfront commit.

For further cost reduction and increased efficiency, Bytes also used their Cloud Investment Management Services (CIMS). This service uses Bytes' Quantum analytics platform to monitor cloud activity, and analytics experts to provide clear recommendations on licensing, compute and workload management. Willmott Dixon followed Bytes' expert advice, making full use of reserved instances and hybrid-use benefits – two key benefits of CIMS.

For additional support, Bytes recommended and partnered with New Signature. This trusted partner helped Willmott Dixon accurately predict their future Azure workload and virtual machine usage. They also provided technical assistance during the migration of instances and applications to Azure, whilst Bytes provided an estimation of consumption costs.

Benefits
Willmott Dixon gained the following benefits:

- The IT team no longer need to maintain servers, they can be more productive and focus on urgent tasks. The simpler infrastructure also boosts their efficiency.
- The company can be more agile when spinning up environments for testing and development, with no need to ensure there's enough compute in the data centre. This also cuts CapEx costs for hardware.
- Removing the need to rent an expensive third-party data centre delivers a big cost saving.
- Using the cloud expends less energy than on-site solutions. This suits a sustainably minded company like Willmott Dixon.
- Migrating from on-premise infrastructure to Azure has revolutionised how the company provide services to the wider group. It has also given the IT team valuable experience in managing/deploying cloud computing.

In addition, Bytes have helped Willmott Dixon make significant monthly savings in Azure. Bytes' CIMS team are providing on-going support to prevent cloud over-spending, and the company plan to use CIMS to review other areas of spend, such as SQL.