Huntswood Gains Flexibility and Resilience Through AWS Migration with Bytes

Executive Summary

UK-based professional services and recruitment firm Huntswood provides business outsourcing services. The company wanted greater agility and resilience than its existing on-premises setup provided and realized the best way to deliver that was moving to the cloud. The company enlisted the help of AWS Advanced Consulting Partner Bytes to assess its current infrastructure using the AWS Optimization and Licensing Assessment, and to recommend the best way forward. Huntswood has now migrated to AWS, cutting its number of active servers by more than half.

Huntswood Gains Flexibility and Resilience Through AWS Migration with Bytes

Huntswood is a leading provider of outsourced services. Many of the company's projects are reactive, involving the recruitment of a large number of people at very short notice for a client, so it needs the ability to quickly ramp up and then ramp down compute capabilities.

But the company's existing on-premises data center wasn't providing the agility of compute resources it needed to meet the requirements of variable business demand. "We found that we were having to invest heavily in infrastructure that sat unused until the next project came along," says Kirk Croal, chief technology officer (CTO) at Huntswood.

The company also required a more resilient approach than was provided by its on-premises data center, with the possibility of building an additional data center abandoned on cost grounds. In addition, Huntswood wanted to future-proof its technology infrastructure and move away from an on-premises solution.

Huntswood realized migrating to the cloud using Amazon Web Services (AWS) would meet these requirements, but was unable to decide how to proceed, with uncertainty around costs, the timing of any migration, and the skills involved. "Culturally, it's quite a shift forward for how we operate as a business," says Croal.

To help the company get a better understanding of what was needed and its options for moving to AWS, Huntwsood engaged AWS Advanced Consulting Partner Bytes, a UK-based IT services firm, to perform a migration assessment using the AWS Optimization and Licensing Assessment program.

About the customer

Huntswood is a UK-based professional services and recruitment firm. The business delivers resourcing, outsourcing, and advisory services, from complaints to customer service, remediation to resilience—bringing together the people, processes, and knowledge businesses need to succeed.

Getting a Better Understanding of Needs

Bytes, which had previously worked on other projects with Huntswood, performed a full and free assessment of the company's infrastructure using the AWS Optimization and Licensing Assessment program over a 4-week period. "The real benefit of the assessment was that it made us go through everything in detail and identify which old systems were no longer needed and what we considered to be most important," says Adam Fradley, head of DevOps and SecOps at Huntswood.

The report found that Huntswood was running around 110 active servers in its data center. "When the initial report came back, the number of active servers we had was surprising. It made us question what we actually needed," says Croal. "We would build something for a specific project or client. We then wouldn't turn it off—it was just there in case we ever needed it again. The assessment focused our minds to challenge whether we actually needed a platform or service within the business."

Bytes produced a report that detailed the total costs of a migration to AWS, including consumption costs, backup costs, Microsoft licensing options, migration costs, and potential funding available through AWS. The report also laid out the necessary next steps, a timeframe, and an overview of the work involved to complete a successful migration.

Planning a 3-Month Migration to AWS

Together, Huntswood and Bytes created a business case for migrating to AWS that was cost neutral and had future savings baked in. The business case was also built on improved resiliency, avoiding single points of failure, improved security, and a better cost footprint. "So it wasn't just lift and shift, it was lift, shift, and improve," says Croal.

The fact that Bytes could provide an independent view around costs helped give senior management confidence about the investment. Based on this assessment, Huntswood received executive sign-off to migrate to AWS.

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>
> **Kirk Croal**
> Chief Technology Officer, Huntswood

The migration, which was performed by Bytes with funding assistance from AWS, is now complete. Huntswood set a short timeframe of just 3 months to coincide with the end of the contract for its existing data center.

One of the keys to achieving the migration in this timeframe was the collaboration between Huntswood and Bytes. "It's quite rare that we have a customer that is so focused and targeted," says Simon Walker, cloud services director at Bytes. "When the ball gets passed we need the person on the other side to quickly do their thing and pass it back again so we can carry on."

Optimizing Performance by Migrating from 110 Servers to 40

Huntswood initially planned to migrate to 60 servers on AWS from the previous 110. Working with Bytes, it optimized the configuration to reduce this to 40. Performance will be further improved by 'right sizing' the resources that were previously static on the on-premises system. The achieve this, Huntswood is using Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3) for cloud object storage, and Amazon Elastic Block Storage (Amazon EBS) for high-performance block storage.

Huntswood has now improved agility due to the on-demand, serverless computing model provided by AWS that can instantly adjust compute resources based on real demand. "AWS allows us to switch resources on and off more easily and allows us to react more rather than carry the costs of unused services," says Croal.

Resiliency has also improved significantly. "We were looking at getting an additional data center but we had to dismiss it because it would have been £100,000 plus. By going to AWS, we are not going to have to spend that. And that is massive," says Fradley.

Huntswood is also able to monitor its systems more effectively with Amazon CloudWatch, which improves the observability of AWS resources and applications on AWS and on-premises. The company is able to check that jobs have been carried out and that resources have been spun down once they have completed.

Security is the other main area of improvement, with micro segmentation of systems preventing lateral flow of security threats. "As we progressed through the migration, we got a much better understanding of how our systems communicate with each other and it enabled us to put in stronger firewall rules," says Fradley.

Benefits

- Improved flexibility to ramp resources up and down depending on project requirements

- Reduced the number of active servers by more than 50%

- Improved resilience with AWS failover services

- Improved security and monitoring capabilities

About the Partner:

Bytes provide world class expertise in security, storage, and virtualization to licensing, digital transformation, and managed services. Bytes' breadth of insight and experience has helped hundreds of the world's best known brands.