Software Company Speeds Provisioning From Weeks to Minutes With IT & Cloud Transformation

Facing an upcoming lease expiration, this global software company used its migration as a launchpad for large-scale modernization with Azure.

The client

This global software and supply chain management and consulting company boasts more than 4,000 corporate customers across the manufacturing, transportation, distribution, retail, and service industries.

The challenge: Plan and execute a wholesale move to Microsoft Azure

Facing legacy infrastructure challenges from configuration drift to manual process inefficiencies, the client needed to update its aging infrastructure and outdated data management strategy. This revamp would overlap with a lease termination of one of its data centers containing more than 5,000 Virtual Machines (VMs). In addition, a lack of control around cloud consumption and reporting, and inexperience in Azure® best practices, had resulted in spiraling Azure costs. The pending lease termination presented the right opportunity to reevaluate its environment for optimization in Microsoft® Azure in order to limit potential costs, reduce the need for investments in on-premises infrastructure, and modernize decades-old infrastructure deployment methodologies for improved time to market.

Adding another layer of complexity, the client's environment primarily consisted of customer image replicas used for support inquiries. This added unique considerations that our teams were prepared to navigate carefully:

- VM images, including OS system version, settings, etc., needing to be maintained as-is
- Operating systems unable to be refactored or upgraded
- Unsupported software versions needing to be dealt with securely
- Windows Server® 2008 requiring extended support and cost reduction
- Certain environments ineligible for rehosting in Azure in initial phases
- Many servers/VMs accessed infrequently or not at all

Industry:
Software and supply chain management

Insight provided:
- Multiphase project plans and execution
- Detailed Azure architecture design and build-out
- Recommendations for server decommissioning and PaaS/SaaS services
- Migration roadmap to Microsoft Azure
- 24/7 migration factory moving 3,000+ servers to Azure
- Executive-ready Financial Operations (FinOps) dashboard
- Well-Architected Framework (WAF) for scale and security in Azure

Insight services:
- SnapStart assessment
- Consulting Services
- Strategy
- Migration
- Professional Services
- Support Services
- Organizational Change Management (OCM)
- Cloud Economics Assessment
- Azure architecture
- Automation
- Network assessments

The solution: A comprehensive exit strategy roadmap — and ongoing support to leverage cloud investment within Azure

The client engaged Insight to perform an exhaustive assessment of its complete environment, to create an exit strategy, to architect and build out a new Azure framework, and to lay out the migration strategy and project timeline. The overall goal was to vacate the existing data center by 2021 and to optimize compute landscape within the cloud. The client also wanted to use this opportunity to establish a greenfield WAF in Azure as its primary landing zone. This would be done along with retrofitting existing subscriptions to conform to best practices across governance, FinOps, and security. Additionally, this would be the optimal time to gain efficiencies of alternative Software as a Service (SaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS) apps where possible and identify a new co-location option for an on-premises non-Azure data center. Most importantly, the migration needed to be performed with minimal downtime, seamless cutover, and access to 24/7 services.

It was a full-scale project with many moving parts. Insight assembled a team spanning Consulting and Professional Services, Azure architects and engineers, and project managers. Together, we would go on to handle everything from Azure framework and environment build-out to a Cloud Economics Assessment, and planning and implementation for application migration.

We also provided a SnapStart assessment to ensure both the client and our teams had a comprehensive inventory of the client's entire environment. We then performed server-to-server mapping, application inventory, and provided recommendations for PaaS/SaaS candidates and server decommissioning of 19 physical boxes that included the ESX host, as well as legacy Oracle® databases.

With dependencies and other critical considerations in place, Insight began building out a modern cloud platform for the client. Our teams:

- Developed a modern, Infrastructure as Code (IaC)-ready platform that integrated with client change processes
- Extended the client's emerging DevOps capabilities and built a complete CI/CD pipeline with tooling for DevOps and Azure automation, including full lifecycle management of all Azure resources
- Developed an executive-ready FinOps dashboard within Azure to monitor and control pricing
- Designed and secured the new Azure environment, retrofitting existing subscriptions and building a new WAF for a landing zone for the client's 4,200 server migration
- Supported an internal cultural transformation by upskilling the client's teams through collaborative knowledge transfer
- Provided white glove support for the entire environment post-deployment

The benefits: A transformational shift to cloud-focused culture and operations

After completing the initial assessment, we delivered a comprehensive and multiphase plan to execute the migration. Phase One of the project began in May 2020, and we were able to retire approximately 1,500 servers. With the help of a 24/7 migration factory, nearly 3,000 servers were migrated in 18 months — resulting in a seamless, risk-mitigated transition to a new infrastructure rebuilt in Azure.

Following the success of the client's cloud migration, Insight is also supporting ongoing network initiatives. Two network assessments have helped pinpoint targets for modernization and optimization — with overall network transformation well underway.

Benefits:

Reduced complexity of IT service delivery

Retired end-of-life physical infrastructure

Strategic migration of 3,000 servers to Azure

A solid foundation for digital transformation

Cultural transformation across the organization

Better leadership alignment to goals

Massive efficiency gains across provisioning resources (minutes instead of weeks)

Adherence to compliance

Increased security posture

Enhanced visibility and oversight

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