

**Objective**

Build a secure private cloud to accommodate anticipated demand, reduce costs and free IT resource for higher-value projects

Approach

Scoped out project needs at HPE Cloud workshop, created business case and invited tenders

IT Matters

- Embeds cloud expertise within the organization, enabling it to market and consult on new cloud services
- Frees IT staff from lower value tasks, allowing team to concentrate on original solutions

Business Matters

- Reduces IT costs by 30 percent through more efficient hardware, lower energy costs, greater automation and better software management
- Creates a more agile service provision, with ability to scale up on demand and cope with seasonal peaks
- Develops and mentors a team able to provide support over the cloud

Private cloud sees NICS build an IT base to enable service growth

Hewlett Packard Enterprise helps design and build new cloud platform



IT Assist provides services to the [Northern Ireland Civil Service](#) and other public sector organizations. HPE Helion Private Cloud creates a flexible and efficient platform from which it can deliver services even more quickly, flexibly and economically. For IT Assist, it is about lowering service costs and helping redirect precious skilled resources into high value new projects.

Challenge**Provisioning shared services**

IT Assist is a shared services unit delivering ICT support to the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The organization has 300 staff and supplies services to 21,500 users across 300 locations.

The unit has become a victim of its own success. Originally created to service 12 Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments and their agencies, IT Assist has since been approached by other non-departmental public bodies. These now number more than 40, including the Northern Ireland Audit Office, the Legal Services Commission, Belfast Metropolitan College and the Agri-food Biosciences Institute.

“Working with Hewlett Packard Enterprise and Helion Private Cloud means we’re now able to serve a growing customer base, and do so with greater agility while maximizing the benefits of economies of scale. It is simply easier to do this through a cloud solution than through a traditional solution.”

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“Not all wanted the same service,” says Barry Lowry, director of ICT services and strategy, NICS. “Some wanted the full service, from desktop support right the way through to data center, but many wanted to discuss Platform or Infrastructure-as-a-Service. Really, they were looking for us to host their applications, and manage all of the related activities around hosting.”

Examples included the client management system at the Department of Employment and Learning, a new pension system at the Department for Finance and Personnel, and the Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System (NIFAIS) which will replace the very successful Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS), which is DARD’s primary repository for information on food animals and their keepers.

Initially, says Lowry, IT Assist wasn’t looking at cloud: “Using our existing model, which was lots of servers, storage area networks in our data centers, and having already done quite a bit of rationalization and virtualization, we could give customers virtual servers on demand. We had a service catalog which allowed all that.

“But, looking at the scale we were being required to operate at, and acknowledging this demand was only going to go up, it was clear we needed to move from a traditional service model to a cloud-type model.”

At this stage, he says, the discussion shifted to private or public cloud: “We weren’t considering a public cloud-type model for reasons of data security, and because we saw an opportunity to make the most of our data – to reuse the data to get added value from it. We wanted to host our own data, but we thought that we were a sufficient scale that we could provide our own internal private cloud model, which may at some stage, for certain applications, migrate into a hybrid type model.”

Solution

Smarter use of software, superior hardware

Having attended a Hewlett Packard Enterprise Cloud workshop, it was clear IT Assist was in a strong position to move to the cloud. “We’d already done the shared services piece, and we had good management processes in place,” says Lowry. “So we were confident that the migration path for us to get from where we were now to a private cloud model could be relatively pain free.”



Having formed a business case, IT Assist went into a procurement phase through the European Journal and subsequently considered bids from several IT providers. “There were three things in HPE’s favor,” says Lowry. “Firstly, it had the worldwide experience and track record of doing this kind of work. Secondly, the HPE hardware was generally considered to be class-leading. Thirdly, that HPE had an OpenStack strategy and the expertise to support licensed technologies.”

Bottom line, the HPE Helion Cloud solution allowed IT Assist to be confident in making a 30 percent saving. “We’d be providing services using a lot less tin,” explains Lowry, “because of the power and capability of the HPE blades. We’d need a lot less floor space and energy to run the hardware.

“Finally, HPE Helion OpenStack meant our software would cost a lot less to purchase and maintain. We’d be smarter in how we managed our software.

The solution comprises an end-to-end HPE Helion Private Cloud, built on the HPE CloudSystem platform, which is part of the Helion portfolio of cloud solutions. The new private cloud is based on HPE BL460 blade servers, HPE 3PAR StoreServ 7440c Storage, HPE Networking solutions and HPE OneView management software. HPE Helion Professional Services also provides NICS with the technical experts to plan, design and implement the solution.

“In effect, we’re buying hardware, software and services which work closely with and complement our internal resource, and education. HPE provides the mentoring, development and handover to develop our own people,” says Lowry. “It means we’re confident our guys understand how to provide a high level of design, build and support over the new cloud.”

Benefit

Faster, simpler and more efficient

The HPE Helion Private Cloud delivers to NICS the ability to scale up appropriate resource on demand, with the headroom to accommodate future growth. It is faster and simpler to provision services, and better able to cope with peaks in demand.

The first move of a major application into the IT Assists Cloud, Microsoft® Exchange, suggests the solution might deliver savings in excess of Lowry’s expectations. Moving Exchange to the Cloud helped remove 12 racks of equipment to be replaced with just one quarter rack, saving more than £150,000 per annum in space and power costs. If extrapolated across the entire data center, the expected savings look likely to be 30-40 percent.

Lowry says the solution is a far more efficient use of hardware: “We’re now able to serve a growing customer base, and to do so with greater agility. It is simply easier to do this through a cloud solution than through a traditional solution.”

Case study

Northern Ireland
Civil Service

Industry

Public sector

Customer at a glance

HPE Helion Cloud solution

Private Cloud

Hardware

- HPE BL460 blade servers
- HPE BladeSystem c7000 enclosure
- HPE 3PAR StoreServ 7440c Storage
- HPE SN6000 Fiber Channel Switch
- HPE StoreEver MSL6480 Tape Library
- HPE P2000 MSA
- HPE FlexFabric 12910 data center core switch
- HPE 5900 Switch Series
- HPE 5500 SI Switch Series

Software

- HPE Helion OpenStack
- HPE OneView

HPE services

- HPE Helion Professional Services



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He says the HPE Helion Cloud solution enables a far greater degree of service automation, freeing IT staff to work on higher-value tasks. “We’ll need fewer people on support services which means more people available to meet with customers, discuss their challenges and create an appropriate solution. Also, we have better monitoring capabilities in place – a step-change really. It means we’ll be able to identify potential problems – and fix them, before they impact.

“The classic cliché is that organizations spend 80 percent of their resource and money managing what they’ve got, and only 20 percent doing new things. This helps us redress that balance. Because we’re more efficient, there’s more in the budget to take on new projects. And we have more time to produce bespoke work.”

In practical terms, he says this might mean customers doing far more self-service, but using IT Assist experts as consultants when necessary: “It would be quite possible for customers to specify their own servers.”

Invigorating the corporate culture

Lowry says the HPE engagement has helped shift the culture and expectations of his team, and that was only possible through HPE immersing itself in the project.

He gives particular credit to attitude of the HPE Helion Professional Services team.

“One of the key aspects of the whole engagement was that the successful organization would literally come in and live with us, and work side-by-side,” he says. “The traditional expectation that you have a couple of meetings, that the supplier goes off and comes back with a fully delivered, or partially delivered, solution, that’s not the way we do it.

“We’ve had the HPE Helion Professional Services guys in a room, eating with the staff, working with the staff, joking with the staff, building friendships and strong working relationships. The HPE guys have come with us when we’ve approached new customers. This level of immersion has underpinned the whole success of this project.”

He expects a significant rise in demand for cloud services in the coming years: “The business case is simple. We’re offering public sector organizations an improvement in the quality, robustness and resilience of their infrastructure provision at a lower price than it’s costing them at the minute.”

Learn more at
hpe.com/helion

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4AA5-6534ENW, November 2015, Rev. 1