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English Government Department Migrates Critical Business Applications to the Microsoft Azure Cloud Platform

Department for Education

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Several Critical Business applications successfully migrated to the Microsoft Azure Cloud Platform by Nimbus Digital & Technology Innovations (Nimbus) and RiverMeadow Software Inc.

Adopting a 'Cloud First' Policy

The Department for Education (DfE) is responsible for Children's Services and Education in England. As a major UK government department, it tasked itself with embracing the mandate from the Government of 'Cloud First'. The Department has undergone a significant transformation over the last few years and is currently in the process of reducing the footprint of the physical infrastructure located within its on-premise data center facilities. This initiative will reduce costs and also enable the department to mitigate the risks of running critical business applications on ageing hardware and software.

Cloud specialists Nimbus were selected by the DfE to manage the migration a number of critical business applications to the Microsoft Azure Platform. In order to minimise disruption to the Business; while at the same time migrating key applications at pace, Nimbus selected RiverMeadow's cloud migration technologies to enable fast, low cost and low-risk migration of services to Azure.

Using RiverMeadow technologies, Nimbus were able to overcome many of the challenges often encountered when migrating legacy applications and services, this enabled the rapid migration and transformation of these complex legacy systems to Azure.

The successful program has enabled DfE to continue to move away from their existing on-premise Data Centers to Azure with minimal impact on the business, in line with their program completion deadlines.

Legacy Application Migration

Legacy applications are often not designed to be used in virtual or cloud environments, this often leads to "orphaned" applications; applications deemed too critical/important to move; applications that no one really "wants to touch".

Using the RiverMeadow Cloud Migration Platform to migrate these legacy applications hosted on both Physical and Virtual machines, Nimbus were able to migrate the applications and then, if required, to manually reconfigure the cloud-hosted systems prior to UAT.

DfE Challenges

Embrace a Government mandate of 'Cloud First' for all new technologies

Reduce the footprint of the physical infrastructure located within its on-premise data center facilities

Mitigate the risks of running critical business applications on ageing hardware and software

Ensuring a 'service as usual' experience to end-users during the migration

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Dal Sandhu, Cloud Solution Architect, Nimbus

A concern for DfE was ensuring a 'service as usual' experience to end-users whilst the migration took place. It was vital that the legacy applications remained up and running during working hours with minimal downtime.

The flexibility of the RiverMeadow toolset ensured system availability, so when the production environment was cut over to Azure, there was minimal impact to end-users. "What we liked about RiverMeadow is that with planning and testing, once the environment was set up, and the "dots were aligned" the actual migration rapidly became a point and click exercise" states Dal Sandhu, Cloud Solution Architect at Nimbus.

A Guaranteed Successful Outcome

A particular advantage of RiverMeadow's Cloud Migration Solution is its Preflight Checking feature. According to James Duncan, Cloud Solutions Architect at Nimbus, "the ability of RiverMeadow's Preflight capability enabled us to predict ahead of time the likely outcome of a migration. This not only helped to significantly speed up the entire process, but it also guaranteed a successful result." This 'first attempt success rate' allowed Nimbus to move forward with minimal impact to the DfE in line with the tight cut-over deadlines imposed by the business.

Results from the Preflight testing allowed Nimbus to resolve any migration conflicts before the migration actually started. This increased the success rate of migrations and had the added benefit of increasing the confidence of application owners during the actual migration, this, in turn, minimised requirements for User Acceptance Testing.

Reducing the amount of UAT that was required on a migrated system meant that the actual migrations were completed with minimal disruption to end-users. By planning the migrations to take place outside of core business hours, Nimbus were able to complete the migration of complete application platforms to Microsoft Azure, and have the migrated system available from Azure in time for the next start of the business day.

Regular product updates to the migration toolset provided continual improvements to the platform. Using new functionality delivered by RiverMeadow at the end of development sprints, Nimbus were able to quickly utilise new functionality and include previously "not supported" platforms within the scope of the migration. Working closely with RiverMeadow support teams, Nimbus were able to quickly resolve impediments to delivery, with fixes to workarounds or additional functionality often included in later product releases.

Conclusion

Nimbus and RiverMeadow completed the rapid migration and transformation of complex legacy systems to Azure on the first attempt, enabling DfE to migrate from their existing on-premise Data Centers to Azure. This has led to extensive cost and time savings and also improved service to end-users.

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Nimbus Digital & Technology Innovations focus on providing collaborative, agile, digital and technological innovations that enable customers to benefit from running their business and IT Services in the cloud.

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RiverMeadow leads the market with its Cloud Migration Services and purpose-built Multi-Cloud Software Platform that dramatically reduce the time, cost and risk associated with moving physical, virtual and cloud-based workloads into and between public, private and hybrid clouds.