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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

‘Into the Cloud’ Migration Programme

Background

The University of Plymouth (UoP) outlined their ‘Into the Cloud’ programme in 2018. The programme was partially driven by the need to reduce operational overheads, however the main drivers for change were to simplify the application estate, which had evolved over many years, and to resolve known areas of underlying infrastructure risk and technical debt. At the time UoP had an aging on-premise data centre at the Plymouth campus, which was consuming an increasing amount of internal resource. UoP wanted to achieve a wider set of benefits, including those associated with the move to a modern and state-of-the-art supported environment, characterised by improved scalability and responsiveness.

Challenge

For this complex change programme, the most significant challenges were associated with UoP’s traditional service operating model. The CIO and his management team had been keen to not only participate in the project, but wanted to quickly establish themselves and to be able to inform and influence the project’s direction and the universities ability to capitalise on this opportunity for change. By formally including UoP IT staff into the delivery team, and by setting out the terms of a knowledge and skills planning process, any resistance was soon overcome.

In parallel with implementation work, the CIO instigated a review and where necessary a re-design of their existing IT Service Operating Model. From a technical perspective the main challenges focused on a poor understanding of application details, particularly from an integration perspective. A lack of documentation had foiled past attempts to address these risks. Other main challenges were the ambitious timescales and the capped budget within which the stated aims had to be achieved.

- Reduced TCO
- Reduced risk profile
- Reduced on-premise DC presence
- Modern, scalable, and flexible architecture
- Remove reliance on key individuals
- Smoothed OPEX cost model

Why CoreAzure ?

The University of Plymouth selected CoreAzure as its modernisation partner for the following reasons:

- We came highly recommended by Microsoft. CoreAzure has a range of Microsoft accreditations including cloud centre of excellence and advanced specialisms
- We were able to demonstrate similar examples of successful enterprise level cloud migrations. We had previously migrated many of the applications within their portfolio
- We could demonstrate a successful track record in helping organisations exploit the full potential of the Microsoft cloud platform, particularly relevant given that UoP were keen to use the cloud platform capabilities to modernise and enhance services
- Over previous years we had developed a common Microsoft cloud platform for Higher Education. This has helped our clients to drive down implementation costs and speed up implementation timescales
- Our engagement model was focused on upskilling and enabling the in-house teams.

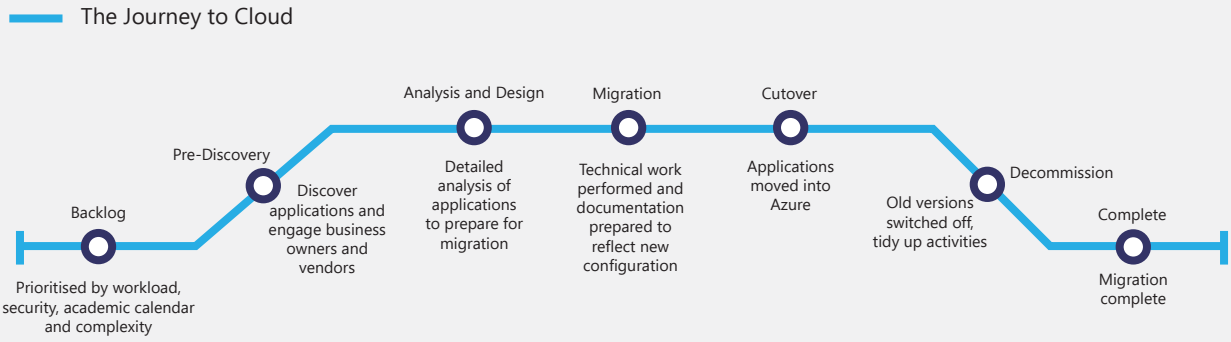
The Solution

With c.650 servers, 200TB of storage capacity, and 270 applications in scope, the task to migrate around 85% of the estate in 18-months required careful planning. Fortunately CoreAzure had completed a cloud readiness assessment that had not only outlined a successful business case, but had already established the migration blueprint from both an architectural and application perspective.

The first task was to implement the Azure Landing Zone and to address a number of technical pre-requisites such as campus networking and the implementation of ExpressRoute, and in parallel, plan a succession of migration work packages.

Immediately following the design and build phase, the migration work packages commenced. These were implemented using an Agile methodology to provide UoP with full visibility of resourcing and costs, and also facilitated continuous change and flexibility.

Previous experience had taught us that during migration projects, the application portfolio undergoes significant changes as we actively pursued opportunities to leverage PaaS and SaaS deployment strategies, while maintaining a proactive approach to decommissioning both line-of-business and infrastructure applications.



Results

The project was successfully delivered on time and within the budgetary envelope agreed at the start of the project. The main project benefits include:

- The University had established a modern, scalable, and flexible infrastructure architecture
- The on-premise application and infrastructure estate had been reduced by around 80%. Levels of application optimisation had been higher than expected. The programme had been the catalyst to decommission around 40% of their application portfolio and further simplified via adoption of PaaS
- The risk profile had been reduced to acceptable levels. Recovery and business continuity capabilities had been aligned to business requirements, and the integration layer had been optimised using LogicApps and ESB
- By re-designing the Service Operating Model, UoP had reduced their reliance on key individuals and were able to focus more of their efforts on building business value
- Implementing cloud had established a transparent opex-based cost model
- The Total Cost of Ownership had been reduced in line with the business case projections.

"We are in the process of formulating plans to exploit the potential of cloud. The migration to the cloud gave us a once in a lifetime opportunity to simplify our IT environment, address technical debt, and to create new IT-enabled capabilities to enhance the services we provide and the efficiency of the universities business processes."
Paul Westmore CIO, University of Plymouth

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