Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Objective
Create a platform to deliver swift, secure and reliable hosting for customers

Approach
Researched the market for a solution that would provide sophisticated automation beyond the Operating System level

IT Matters
- Reduces platform delivery times from days to just hours
- Eliminates error and misconfiguration by delivering modular, repeatable solutions
- Increases the efficiency of customer support through uniform blueprints and reference architectures

Business Matters
- Speeds time-to-market and increases the competitive offering
- Promotes new business through HPE Professional Services support and roadmap
- Enables Phoenix to offer highly flexible and reliable services to its customers

Phoenix cuts provisioning times for cloud platforms

HPE Software Professional Services delivers successful cloud automation project

When Managed Service Provider Phoenix launched its new CloudSure UK service, the main aim was to offer quicker provisioning times for new customers. Automation was the answer and Phoenix now delivers that with HPE CloudSystem Enterprise and HPE Cloud Service Automation solutions. The success of this enterprise has been underpinned by HPE Professional Services.

Challenge

Supporting ambitious growth curve
Phoenix was formed in 1979 to design and manufacture hardware but following a proactive history of acquisitions and mergers it has now grown into one of the UK's leading IT service providers. Its 15 data centres across the UK include five main hosting sites and can house 1,996 server racks, managing 529TB of data for over 3,300 businesses. Also operating 23 regional sites in the UK, including business continuity centres, Phoenix employs over 2,300 staff and its call centres dealt with 293,296 calls in 2013/14.

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> "Delivering the infrastructure for a typical Platform-as-a-Service customer used to take up to fifteen days. That process has now been shortened to a matter of hours."
>
> – Mark Scaife, head of technical development, Phoenix

The success of Phoenix is based on the breadth of its portfolio which is designed to meet all customer requirements. In the early days, it offered traditional services supporting local servers on customer sites and in its own UK-based data centres and provided printer, desktop and client support as well as Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) centric services. Now its offering includes Software-as-a-Service, Infrastructure-as-a-Service, Storage-as-a-Service, Backup-as-a-Service, cloud backup, replication and storage services.

Phoenix implemented its first cloud-style service over eight years ago when it offered Platform-as-a-Service on a virtual shared platform using the VMware Hypervisor. Since then its cloud progress has been an evolution rather than a revolution. It added two further VMware vSphere platforms, but as the importance of cloud gathered momentum, it needed a more sophisticated solution.

"We wanted to speed up the delivery of customer environments because previously, this was a very manual task," explains Mark Scaife, head of technical development at Phoenix. "We needed to reduce the amount of professional services we had to sell on to customers by introducing more automation."

Solution

Professional Services are key

Phoenix considered various vendors and chose an HPE Converged Infrastructure aligned architecture based on HPE CloudSystem Enterprise, overlaid with HPE Cloud Service Automation (CSA) software and delivered by HPE Software Professional Services. It's now marketed under the Phoenix brand name of CloudSure UK.

"Phoenix and Hewlett Packard Enterprise have a long-standing relationship that goes back many years," explains Scaife. "It was a natural selection because most of the competition offered automation but not to the level that we wanted it. Often automation solutions go to an operating system level, but we wanted to take it to the next step by having our monitoring agents, anti-virus and set up for our patching and deployment paths so that if a customer came along and wanted Microsoft® Exchange or Microsoft® SQL for example, automation would enable us to deliver those in line with Microsoft and HPE best practices. We really liked what the HPE solution gave us in terms of flexibility and assisting us in standing services up quickly. Because of our relationship with HPE, we also knew that we could rely on them to deliver and ensure that we had relevant staff available on site to help us get the solution up and running as quickly as possible."

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HPE Software Professional Services delivered this functionality utilising HPE Cloud Maps, a set of pre-configured settings for HPE CSA that accelerated the implementation and time to value for Phoenix.

The Phoenix HPE CloudSystem Enterprise solution consists of an HPE BladeSystem c7000 Enclosure housing HPE ProLiant BL465 Gen8 server blades with top of rack connection from the HPE 5900 Switch Series and an HPE 3PAR StoreServ 7400 Storage platform. The infrastructure is managed from an HPE CloudSystem Matrix operating environment and HPE CSA software enables the hybrid delivery of cloud solutions. Storage and backup are managed with HPE StoreOnce Backup and HPE Data Protector Software.

"Once we had selected Hewlett Packard Enterprise as a vendor, HPE and Phoenix were both keen to put their best people forward for this joint exercise to make sure that it was a successful platform and that it delivered what we were asking for," says Scaife. "Right from the get-go the resource allocated to this was quite heavy. HPE Professional Services assigned a technical design architect to work with me for Phoenix and he had a really good understanding of the whole hardware and software stack. He made it really easy to come up with the finalised designs of how we wanted it to look and Phoenix were keen everything was highly available, resilient and expandable in the future."

"HPE also supplied a project manager who was fully conversant with the inner workings of One HPE. He did a really good job of making sure that everything worked well together, making sure we hit project milestones and keeping the project on track. We had people working on the platform from as far away as Brazil and HPE also flew specialists over from Amsterdam."

Benefits

Flexible, reliable offering
The HPE solution has enabled Phoenix to achieve its key aims of flexibility and speed of deployment for customer infrastructures.

"The benefits we are seeing are primarily around our platform delivery times. It used to take between ten and 15 days to stand up the infrastructure for a typical Platform-as-a-Service customer and that process has now been shortened to a matter of hours," says Scaife. "We are a big service provider with a lot of architects and they all had their own ideas of how they build infrastructures for customers. Delivering automation with the HPE solution has enabled us to bring uniformity into the business by ensuring that everyone's solutions are delivered in exactly the same way. Building things to the same professional standards also means that our support teams know exactly what they're getting every time with the same blueprint and the same reference architecture backed by the same service description and that's vitally important."

Customer at a glance

Hardware
- HPE CloudSystem Enterprise
- HPE BladeSystem c7000 Enclosure
- HPE ProLiant BL465 Gen8 server blades
- HPE 5900 Switch Series
- HPE 3PAR StoreServ 7400 Storage
- HPE CloudSystem Matrix operating environment

Software
- HPE Cloud Service Automation
- HPE StoreOnce Backup
- HPE Data Protector

HPE services
- HPE Professional Services

"Whenever HPE Professional Services came up against any deployment issues, they quickly brought in the right people, so we have a solution that worked well and that we could both be proud of."

– Mark Scaife, head of technical development, Phoenix

"The automation engine in HPE CloudSystem Enterprise enables us to deliver a Platform-as-a-Service server which has been pre-set with all the management agents for anti-virus, patching and is connected to our monitoring solution. This modular deployment matches our business processes and is exactly the same every time, so there's no room for error or misconfiguration. Every reference architecture has been created in detail and the process matched to the automation logic.

"All our customers are bespoke in some way, so there is still some post-deployment work to do but with the HPE CloudSystem Enterprise toolset, rather than doing the preconfiguration manually for each customer we are doing it inside CSA – so when the next customer comes along and wants the same customisation, we have already automated it. That is further reducing our stand-up times because we're capturing everything in automation, getting the business process and logistics right and making sure it goes through all our change and compliance systems. We are just going to keep seeing the benefits of this as we get further and further into the solution."

HPE Professional Services are now regarded as a trusted advisor for Phoenix and its input has been one of the major foundations for the success of the project. Through its inherent design of the platform, HPE Professional Services has ensured that Phoenix will be able to bring CSA functionality such as Lifecycle Management and Extensible Architecture online when the business is ready to transition to them.

"This was the first time that we had really attacked the cloud market with any purpose and using the experience of HPE Professional Services helped reduce time to market for CloudSure UK," adds Scaife. "The HPE team was very professional."

Hewlett Packard Enterprise remains close to Phoenix to ensure that the platform is successful. Its specialists join Phoenix customer meetings to demonstrate the solution's capabilities and it has produced a future roadmap showing how HPE solutions can help Phoenix achieve its future business aims.

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