

Risc IT Solutions

Oliver & Co Solicitors

Microsoft Azure Case Study



Microsoft
Partner



Gold Small and Midmarket Cloud Solutions
Gold Cloud Productivity
Gold Enterprise Mobility Management
Gold Datacenter
Silver Cloud Platform

Challenge

Oliver & Co Solicitors are an outstanding North West legal firm, offering comprehensive legal advice and support to individuals, their families and businesses alike. They serve a nationwide client base from their office in Chester.

We were introduced to Oliver & Co through our security partner Protos Networks, who were helping them achieve their Cyber Essentials accreditation. During this process, it was revealed that their existing provider had recommended that Oliver & Co should move the company's information to the Cloud.

Once they had moved though, their experience was far from what they had expected, and the flexibility, resiliency and freedom that they had hoped for just wasn't there. Something was amiss.

Upon further exploration it became apparent that they hadn't moved to "the" Cloud, they had moved to "a" Cloud. Aside from having access through any network enabled device, it wasn't dissimilar to an on-premise solution, so they weren't experiencing any of the real benefits of the Cloud, such as scalability and flexibility. They also had a crucial line of business application that was continuing to be temperamental causing disruption and increasing frustration amongst staff.

This had been ongoing for a couple of years and they were exasperated. Once we, and they, fully understood their situation, we set out to put things right.

Solution

After discussing their setup and goals further, and gaining a deeper understanding about what they expected from their initial move to the Cloud, we were able to start scoping a new solution for them. Being in a highly regulated industry meant security and compliance was a top priority. They also wanted a solution that was flexible; it needed to grow with them and change to suit their needs in the future. Additionally, it needed to be compatible with their line of business application, and, of course, affordable. With all this in mind, our Azure Managed Service became the clear solution.

We began by taking a full backup of their infrastructure, which was necessary to ensure complete security. The next stage was to replicate their current setup in Azure. We needed to provision a domain controller, a file server, and a server for their ESET antivirus solution. The domain controller replicated their permissions into the Cloud, meaning there was no password or permission changes for the end users – essentially, we did the hard work for them at an admin level. Once these were built, the final stage was moving their line of business application. This required an app server and some RDSs as well.

All of this was performed over a weekend: the users logged out at 4pm on Friday, and by 8am Monday everything was complete with an immediately noticeable improvement in performance.

The beauty of true Cloud computing, like Azure, is the facility to scale up and down and flex requirements to suit changing needs rather than being limited by physical servers. Being in Azure meant we were able to do just that. After a few weeks of measuring their performance, we decided that it could be enhanced even more by increasing their RAM and this would only be a small change in cost. This upgrade simply wouldn't have been possible on an on-premise server, or on their old 'Cloud' infrastructure.

Costing Models

Azure is charged by the second on a 'pay as you go' basis. However, if your infrastructure is long-term and stays relatively stable, you can 'reserve' your Virtual Machines for 12 or 36 months giving you huge discounts of up to 60%. This is essentially committing to pay for that server for the specified length of time and is called a 'Reserved Instance'.

What Risc typically do is show a customer what the 'pay as you go' costs will be for an initial period of one or two weeks. Following that, we have a proof of concept period where the allocated resources will be measured to ensure adequate performance and suitability. At the stage where everything is running perfectly and all parties are happy, we then commit to 12 or 36 months to apply discounts. For us, this is the right way to approach Azure.

Results

Moving to Azure meant Oliver & Co were able to experience the true benefits of the Cloud: flexibility, scalability, resilience and freedom, as well as world-class security. For their end users, everything is the same as before, but better.

The flexibility Azure provides means that the solution can grow with the organisation, so if they decide to change their line of business application or double their number of staff, they are able to tailor their infrastructure easily.

We are proud to have helped Oliver & Co and to reaffirm the positive experiences of the Cloud. Our relationship with them has continued to grow, including a recent Teams telephony deployment and further upcoming changes to their Azure Infrastructure.

We look forward to assisting them in their continued growth.

"From the moment we engaged with Risc they understood our situation and concerns, and provided clarity on how we could resolve the issues. Every stage was delivered seamlessly with clear expectations, including timeframes and importantly costs. What made it even easier, is that they really value service. A pleasure to work with."

Liz Chapman - Associate Director

"The expression 'they're an extension of our team' has been overused, but I can't think of a better way to put it, as in this case it's true. I can now go on holiday and relax when I'm there as I know we're in safe hands."

Nick Pennink - Head of IT

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