

CoreAzure helps public universities graduate to the cloud



A public sector disparity in cloud delivery

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Getting on the path to cloud adoption

By teaming up with CoreAzure and Microsoft, these institutions would go on to experience not only budgetary benefits, but a wealth of new digital opportunities.

A new mission for bridging a technological divide

The success CoreAzure has enjoyed helping universities transition to the Microsoft Azure platform has resulted in higher education becoming the company's biggest growth area, and the universities have benefited from the increased accessibility and convenience of cloud-based services.

Founded in 2014 and based in the Greater London area, CoreAzure is one of the leading Microsoft Gold Certified partners in the United Kingdom. The team at CoreAzure quickly became experts at helping their customers derive the maximum benefit from Microsoft technologies. Along the way they not only excelled at helping organizations transition to the cloud, but also recognized a disparity in the public sector for cloud delivery. It became their mission to help fill this gap.

In addition to successful cloud migration projects with governmental agencies like the Ministry of Justice and the Food Standards Agency, CoreAzure also helped the first university in the UK move to a public cloud, which opened the door to many more engagements within higher education. These institutions faced aging technological infrastructures and an inability to respond to the digital needs of students that affected their financial outlooks. By teaming up with CoreAzure and Microsoft, these universities would go on to experience not only budgetary benefits, but a wealth of new digital opportunities.

Getting on the path to cloud adoption

Compared to other industries, higher education has historically been slow to adopt cloud computing. A mix of factors, however, including budgetary constraints that limit options for on-premises technology and increased expectations of students for digital convenience, have established the need for universities to explore other options. For universities, this conversion would be a chance to overhaul aging infrastructure, revolutionize their

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IT systems, and transform the services they provide to students, all while reducing residual risk, consolidating their application estates, and becoming more transparent about costs.

Two public institutions – Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Plymouth – that were in the process of large hardware refresh cycles consulted with CoreAzure and made the decision to migrate to the cloud. It not only made financial sense, but the architectural plan outlined by CoreAzure would help streamline and enhance digital delivery. But it would not be a simple one-to-one conversion.

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Consolidation and optimization

To usher both universities into the cloud, CoreAzure not only worked closely with the Sheffield Hallam and Plymouth IT teams, but with their Microsoft partnership development manager.

“It's a compelling proposition when a partner teams up with Microsoft really closely because you get additional assurances that Microsoft bring,” Dawson said. “And I think Microsoft also learn from the partner as well in terms of what

works and how to convert opportunities.”

According to Dawson, one of the unique challenges posed by cloud migration in higher education is trying to untangle the often unwieldy and inefficient application estates universities can evolve over time. Key to CoreAzure's approach is fundamentally understanding a university's estate in order to not only consolidate and optimize the cloud infrastructure but prevent any service outages in the process.

“The Cloud Discovery Assessment that CoreAzure completed here at University of Plymouth has helped us to understand more about our unique pathway to cloud,” said Paul Westmore, IT director at the University of Plymouth, “allowing us to better and more accurately understand the cost of cloud vs. our on-premise equivalent.”

In addition to re-architecting and re-factoring applications, CoreAzure used an IaaS lift-and-shift approach to both migrations, requiring minimal changes to the associated data. Next-generation firewalls were configured, as well as additional



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Microsoft security products like Sentinel and Azure Security Center. ExpressRoute was utilized not only for the added security of a hybrid connection with VPN failover, but for faster speeds with consistent latency. Both migrations were completed over the course of about 18 months.

Standing out from the competition

The success CoreAzure has enjoyed helping universities transition to the Microsoft Azure platform has resulted in higher education becoming the company's biggest growth area. Students at Plymouth and Sheffield Hallam have benefited from the increased accessibility and convenience of cloud-based services, which has been especially useful during the era of expanded remote learning.

"Cloud has made a real difference to the way in which a student interacts with the university,"

Dawson said. "Increasingly universities will see a competitive advantage for more modern computing-based services as a way of differentiating themselves from the competition."

The benefits of working with CoreAzure and Microsoft for universities don't stop at reduced operating expenses and higher student satisfaction. CoreAzure continues to act in a managed service capacity for their customers, leveraging the benefits of the cloud to drive efficiencies and improvements.



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