

SuperChoice uses Offis to adopt a multi-cloud strategy with RightScale

Overview:

In 2014, the Australian government announced a new superannuation system called SuperStream, with all employers and super funds required to transition to the new system by 30 June 2016. This presented a major challenge for SuperChoice, a superannuation and pensions ecommerce company that supplies cloud-based management and clearing house software to employers, superannuation funds, banks and payroll companies.

“It’s led to a substantial transformation within the organisation,” says Ian Gibson, CIO of SuperChoice. “In the last two and a half years ... we’ve redeveloped our core platform to respond to the industry requirements; we’ve changed the way we developed that platform; we’ve changed the culture to be more oriented towards a software-as-a-service [model]; and then, more recently, we’ve fundamentally reshaped our infrastructure so as to not only enable us, but to support us moving forward.”

Very soon, it became clear that a multi-cloud strategy presented a financial opportunity as well as a practical one. “The opportunity to arbitrage between different providers and to take advantage of spot-on marginal pricing [suggested] some real benefits. We did some preliminary research with AWS where we looked at spot versus fixed pricing, and depending on your ability to take advantage of that, the savings were substantial. For 11 different configurations we looked at, it was an average of 84% so that’s huge.”

While the opportunity was clear, how to implement the right multi-cloud strategy with the minimum of disruption and maximum of control certainly wasn’t. The SuperStream deadline was a line in the sand. Failure just wasn’t an option.

The Challenge:

A key goal for the project was to simplify, modernise and speed up the development process by adopting more efficient DevOps practices so that highly complex environments could be deployed consistently and on demand.

This required specially designed automation processes as well as a powerful cloud management platform so that environments could be provisioned in one cloud and easily transferred to another cloud if and when required.

- Combining RightScale cloud management with Offis multi-cloud expertise
- Adapting old legacy systems for a new life in the cloud
- Transforming how a business works from the infrastructure up



The RightScale Universal Cloud Management platform is made up of three integrated modules that enable enterprises to orchestrate, automate, and govern applications across any cloud, any server, and any container. RightScale was the clear choice for the cloud management platform, but SuperChoice also needed the necessary expertise to design and automate the new infrastructure to meet their specific needs and workflows.

“There are a lot of companies that will say they are cloud first across the board,” says Bailey Caldwell, Director of Professional Services for RightScale. “Actually delivering on that, once they get into the trenches, becomes a much more difficult challenge. Many businesses that I’ve worked with have been all-in on cloud for years, and they’re still not there. Their appetite was larger than their ability to execute.”

“We talked to other people that use RightScale and the reality is there aren’t that many people out there that really understand it,” says Gibson. “What led us to Offis was their expertise in automated deployments and RightScale. There just aren’t that many people in the market familiar with this. Offis were able to demonstrate upfront that they knew what they were doing and have continued to demonstrate that through their work with us”

The Solution:

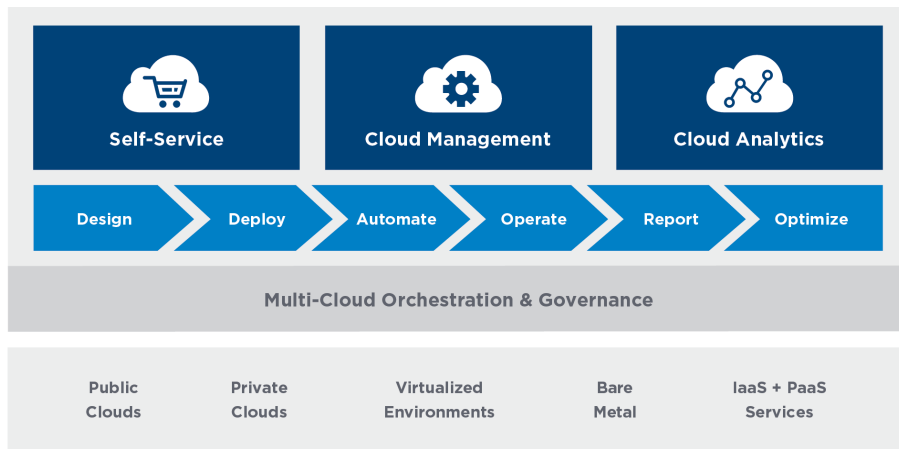
“What Offis has done for SuperChoice is build a process to maintain all of their business collateral about application versions and deployment models to generate cloud application templates and automate execution. They can now deliver complex environments including networks, databases, application servers as often as they want at the push of a button to whichever cloud they would like to deliver them to,” says Greg Steel, senior consultant and solution architect at Offis. “So for SuperChoice, infrastructure and environment provisioning is no longer a constraint. What this increased agility in environment provisioning amounts to is the ability for SuperChoice to deliver business changes more quickly for their customers and as an organization, spend most of their time and energy delivering new features and functions to market for their clients and less time on infrastructure.”

“Many people start [moving to the cloud] by deploying their newest, most cloud-ready apps, whereas we actually did the opposite,” says Gibson. “We took our core legacy system built 17 years ago and deployed that to the cloud.” The legacy system is now reborn as a highly flexible and powerful cloud service capable of running in either AWS or a private cloud facility, moving between the two as required to maximise cost and performance.

However, Gibson is quick to point out that it’s not just about price. “For us, it was really the substantial change in the way we develop our code.” SuperChoice’s developers are now in a position to create new virtual environments on demand, speeding up the process of testing and deploying code into Pre Production. “[Previously,] it would take us ten-plus weeks to create a whole new environment that was ready for a client to use. We can now do that in under an hour.”

In fact, the new cloud app works so well it has surprised many stakeholders within the business. “We went back to the organisation and said, “Hey, guys, do you realise we’ve just deployed our legacy app into AWS? It’s working and we can have that up and running in just under an hour.” The look of amazement on some of the faces was just priceless, including our CEO who said, “Are you serious? We’ve actually done that?””

Caldwell has watched SuperChoice’s cloud transformation with interest. “Offis has done a great job of bringing them very fast from [seeing] an opportunity in the cloud to improve agility to them [putting] the whole company and all of their software and IT assets into a cloud model.”



“ A large corporate organisation ...can actually go through this process with a legacy app and still get value out of it ... as if it was a new, more cloud-ready application. ”

Ian Gibson
 Chief Information Officer
 SuperChoice Services Pty Ltd



Next Steps:

Offis continues to work closely with SuperChoice, leading the project to implement a complete software-defined data centre with full environment orchestration and automated provisioning. “SuperChoice is now incredibly agile,” says Steel. “They can build a complex environment involving multiple network tiers, firewalls, DNS, multiple servers and dozens of applications on the fly within an hour across private and public clouds. And they can repeat the exercise as often and as many times as they need, all whilst achieving IaaS cost optimisation. **Infrastructure is no longer a constraint.**”

RIGHT SCALE®

RightScale Universal Cloud Management enables leading enterprises to accelerate delivery of cloud-based applications that engage customers and drive top-line revenue while optimizing cloud usage to reduce risk and costs. With RightScale, IT organizations can deliver instant access to a portfolio of public, private, and hybrid cloud services across business units and development teams while maintaining enterprise control. RightScale Consulting Services help companies develop cloud strategies, deliver cloud projects, and optimize cloud usage. Since 2007, leading enterprises including Audi, Pinterest, and Yellow Pages Group have launched millions of servers through RightScale.

Since 1997, Offis has designed and deployed thousands of hosting services for some of the biggest brands in Australia and around the world. Today, Offis provides customised services and round-the-clock support across the entire cloud hosting strategy: from planning to implementation, management and beyond. Offis expertise and technology manages the cloud infrastructure for major businesses including OzForex, Hamilton Island, FoodStuffs and Pepper Homeloans.

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