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Keeping Eurostar on track with cloud transformation

Hitachi Consulting takes Oracle E-Business Suite to the cloud with Amazon Web Services

Background

Eurostar provides high-speed rail service from London to multiple cities in Europe, running 18,000 services each year. For Eurostar's CIO, Laurent Bellan, cloud is the only option for future success at the company. "We are convinced that moving to the cloud is not a question of if but when," he said. "We need to be able to make changes to our technology systems frequently, quickly and incrementally to continuously improve what we do. Cloud enables us to do that."

Adding to the pressure of moving to the cloud, the company's traditional data center agreement was about to expire, and they had to respond quickly to transfer key systems and avoid incurring huge additional contracting costs.

Business Challenge

Perhaps the largest aspect of the technical migration project was Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS). Oracle EBS is one of Eurostar's biggest systems – relied upon for everything from employee payroll to supplier procurement. Users had started to experience performance degradation. With only limited resources to manage its Oracle infrastructure, people were uncovering problems during peak periods.

With Oracle EBS running on physical servers in a third-party data center, the Eurostar IT team was restricted in how quickly it could respond and make changes. To achieve agility and cost-effective operations, Eurostar decided to take its entire Financials, Payroll,

iProcurement and HR records system to the cloud. Laurent and his team saw this as an opportunity to implement an Oracle EBS system that would be more reliable, easier to scale at peak times and flexible enough to avoid holding on to costly spare licenses or server capacity.

Transferring Oracle EBS to the cloud would involve migrating close to 30 databases with terabytes of data and turning on new features to enhance performance for users. With the pending expiration of the data center contract, Eurostar had just six months to complete the migration.

After scoping out the migration project, Eurostar realized that its internal team did not have the resources to meet the deadline. "We had created a business case based on certain assumptions," said Laurent. "However, we initially underestimated what would be needed to migrate Oracle EBS. As a result, we quickly needed a plan that would still enable us to meet the deadline. That's when we looked for external support."

Solution

Hitachi Consulting was one of several companies asked to present options for technical Oracle EBS cloud migration support. The Hitachi team responded with a comprehensive plan that assessed the best cloud options, defined the implementation requirements and laid out the resources required on both sides to hit the target. As Nicola Palmer, Head of Corporate and Operational Systems at Eurostar recalls, "Hitachi gave us options and a detailed analysis

Summary

Background
- Provides high-speed rail service connecting London with multiple cities in Europe
- Established strategy to move IT operations to the cloud

Business Challenge
- Migrate dozens of apps and 30 databases to the cloud
- Migration deadline of six months
- Improve Oracle EBS system performance and business agility

Solution
- Conducted technology-agnostic review, leading to selection of the AWS cloud platform
- Migrated Oracle EBS, including sprint capabilities to speed deployment
- Increased post-implementation support to include infrastructure management

Value Delivered
- Completed migration in five months, delivering savings of £3million over five years
- Improved availability of systems and services, enabling access anytime, anywhere, by any device
- Delivered faster deployment of new apps, with ability to auto-scale

as well as different flavors of delivery – including switching between onshore and offshore operations – to ensure we got what we needed."

For Martin Chapman, Professional Services Team Leader at Eurostar, Hitachi's proposal "would ensure that we got everything done as soon as possible so we could get on with our real work – running Eurostar on behalf of our customers."

Hitachi's original technology-agnostic tender had examined the business case for a number of cloud platforms. Other Eurostar systems had already been migrated to Amazon Web Services (AWS), so the company chose this platform.

As Laurent highlighted, "Hitachi was investing in AWS as a market leader. This would be just as important a project for them as it was for us. For a migration with such a tight deadline, that motivation and commitment was essential."

Eurostar had AWS-certified experts, including in its DevOps team. The core combined technical implementation team comprised a lead architect from Eurostar and a blend of in-house technical expertise from Hitachi specialists.

Nigel Ogden, Vice President at Hitachi, believed that emphasis on building the right team created the basis for successful project delivery. "From the original requirement discussions through scoping and then into the implementation itself, it was a fantastic example of how close teamwork between a client and a trusted

> **"Hitachi Consulting proved to be a professional and reliable partner. They created a good project plan. But just as importantly, they showed strong commitment to the project. They were just as invested in the migration to AWS as we were."**
>
> **- Laurent Bellan**
> CIO Eurostar

partner can really achieve great things," he said. "Without a joint team spirit and work ethic, the strict timelines could never have been met on-budget and with the level of quality that we ultimately achieved."

As Nicola points out, "You can have the best technical skills in the world, but if you can't get along with people then the project might not be as successful as it should be. Hitachi brought a culture that was focused but relaxed; we built up a really good rapport."

Value Delivered

High-quality delivery at high speed

Once the migration project started, it would have made no sense to rapidly migrate terabytes of data if the business couldn't function properly at go-live. As Martin said, "Put simply, with this migration we just couldn't afford for anything to go wrong."

Eurostar needed the AWS migration to fulfill its intention of reducing the frustration users felt when waiting for screens to refresh or having to leave payroll processes to complete overnight. Therefore, every element of the migration was broken down into individual activities. Some elements could be set up and then left to run but others required minute-by-minute technical oversight. This is where Hitachi's ability to combine onshore and offshore expertise added extra value to the project.

With the ability to increase the workload whenever required without disrupting the process, the Oracle EBS cloud migration also benefited from a sprint methodology. The combined Hitachi and Eurostar team had 'bursting' capabilities that meant it could quickly put people onto a particular task to get it over the line. "When we said we'd turn it on, we turned it on," said Nicola. "In fact, we finished early and had a couple of hours to spare before go-live. It was more successful than we thought."

Achieving the "unachievable"

Hitachi was tasked with implementing the lead architect's designs. It appointed a dedicated delivery officer while also drawing on expertise from across its internal architect forum. It then set about validating existing systems ready for the migration with a physical and logical

assessment that would give Eurostar the confidence to go live.

"With Hitachi, no task was too big or too small – everyone 'mucked in'," explained Nicola. "In my view, what we achieved in migrating that number of databases in that short amount of time has set the standard for the industry."

Nicola continued, "We had to deliver in a record number of months. But Hitachi exceeded expectations. Everyone was impressed – especially those who hadn't worked directly with them on the migration. For every day we were late, there would have been large costs, and yet all that data went in on time."

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As Laurent pointed out, "Remember, this was a quick process. It was a very important project to Hitachi and us. It was a real challenge and they delivered."

Yet the migration itself was never the end goal. The real objective was to improve the way Eurostar worked with Oracle EBS and empower its teams to make incremental improvements that would deliver business results in the future.

Fewer issues, more agility

Originally, Martin had concerns about the functional impact of moving to the cloud. "We had questions about how responsive the system would be – for example, when users logged on to the cloud. If anything, it's faster. The previous system was painfully slow at times. So, for me, the really positive thing has been having non-production systems that run almost at the same speed as the live environment." For any given project or delivery, the testing cycles were reduced.

This boost in the front- and back-end Oracle EBS performance has resulted in faster interfaces with banks, HMRC and

other cloud systems connected to Oracle EBS. Martin's team can now do more testing than ever before and easily switch over services when ready.

Performance issues are a thing of the past. Eurostar has the agility it requires and Hitachi has become a key partner for ongoing IT infrastructure management.

For Nicola, the difference was clear from the moment the cloud service went live. "Performance improved markedly. Calls to our Service Desk about Oracle EBS were virtually eliminated. All in all, the underlying tension within the business because the system wasn't working as it should, suddenly just disappeared."

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> Vice President Hitachi Consulting

"We knew we would save money by shifting away from a CapEx infrastructure model," Laurent explained. "But it was about more than that. Now that we are in the cloud with Oracle EBS on AWS, the previous performance issues have gone. We have the agility we wanted and can modify the design of our infrastructure so much faster – in days or even hours."

The AWS platform offers deeper analytical capabilities, allowing Eurostar greater visibility of what can be improved incrementally with no need for the rushed upgrades and downtime of the past. As an additional benefit, Hitachi was able to provide Eurostar with a standardized database platform for about 30 of its non-Oracle systems at the same time.

Initially only contracted to continue the applications support for Oracle EBS on AWS, Hitachi's involvement did not end at go-live. After Hitachi demonstrated value throughout the migration process, Eurostar has entrusted additional Oracle operations support on the AWS platform to Hitachi, post-implementation.

As Laurent revealed, "Hitachi knew how to interact with our business and testing teams. It has demonstrated success by smoothly migrating Oracle EBS to AWS. I consider Hitachi to be a reliable partner and I fully expect this to be an ongoing relationship."

About Hitachi Consulting

Hitachi Consulting is the global solutions and professional services organization within Hitachi Ltd., a global innovation leader in industrial and information technology solutions and an early pioneer of the Internet of Things. Hitachi Consulting is a business integrator for the IoT era and a catalyst for digital transformation. Using our deep domain knowledge, we collaborate with clients to help them innovate faster, maximize operational efficiency and realize measurable, sustainable business and societal value. As a consulting-led solutions company, we can help you leverage data as a strategic asset to drive competitive differentiation, customer loyalty and growth. To learn more, visit www.hitachiconsulting.com.

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