

Law firm overhauls IT to drive efficiency

Shakespeare Martineau is a top law firm with an ambitious growth strategy that will see the firm more than double by 2025.

The firm is recognised as forward-thinking with a client-centric focus in the way it delivers legal services. As part of its growth strategy, Shakespeare Martineau has introduced some competitive advantage by transforming segments of its IT platform with the Nutanix private cloud platform.

As part of its ongoing transformation, Shakespeare Martineau opted for a platform that would provide the capacity and flexibility required for continued growth and expansion.

But the firm also saw it as an opportunity to deliver greater value through efficiency and enabling its legal professionals to make fuller use of their time.



“Nutanix is very, very simple to administer and use compared with moving to public cloud, plus we get higher performance with Nutanix and at a reduced cost of ownership”

– Philip Flint, Lead Enterprise Architect, Shakespeare Martineau



INDUSTRY

Legal

BENEFITS

- A move to Nutanix cloud infrastructure will enable all applications and storage services to be operated from a single platform, with one vendor to contact for support
- Integrated disaster recovery tools ease business continuity planning
- Greater performance to drive business efficiency
- 1-Click upgrades and DR capabilities

SOLUTION

Nutanix Hybrid Cloud Platform

- Acropolis Operating System (AOS), including native AHV hypervisor and Distributed Storage Fabric (DSF)
- Prism management
- Xi Leap disaster recovery

CHALLENGE

Shakespeare Martineau is one of the top law firms in the UK, with more than 850 dedicated legal experts in offices across the country. The firm prides itself on providing the full breadth of legal services to businesses, organisations, government departments, as well as people and their families.

The past several years has seen considerable growth for Shakespeare Martineau, which has expanded through a number of acquisitions, almost doubling in size with the merger with Martineau in 2015. But this growth resulted in a complex technical environment, maintaining distributed capabilities to support segments of the organisation to largely work in an autonomous fashion. The firm has matured significantly over recent years and embraced much more cohesive and collaborative ways to operate to deliver the best value and services to its people and its clients. To support this, the firm needed to streamline the way it delivered services internally and externally, according to Dal Virdi, Director of IT at Shakespeare Martineau.

“We recognised that all of those acquisitions had left the firm with an inherited state of complexity and although very functional, did not facilitate the levels of collaboration, automation and agile working that were now required to underpin the firm’s values and refreshed operating model,” Virdi says.

Innovators and disruptors in the legal market, Shakespeare Martineau wanted to use its IT overhaul as an opportunity to drive the business forward.

“With the investment that was being made, with the support of the entire business, we wanted to be brave and break the pattern of just being a sheep in the flock and doing what everybody else within legal is doing. We’d already kicked off some of these business transformation programmes to be more innovative and disruptive within the legal sector and now needed to ensure that we had the very best platforms in place to service those programmes and the firm’s future,” Virdi says.

Specifically, the firm wanted its systems to work more effectively, reliably and efficiently, to maximise fee earners’ time and effort and allow them to focus on delivering the best legal advice and services, according to Philip Flint, Shakespeare Martineau’s Lead Enterprise Architect.

SOLUTION

The law firm was open to all options for delivering its IT services but keen to explore what could be done with technologies already available in the market to take it closer towards where it wanted to be, which is to move onto a common platform for all IT services. This included adopting a ‘cloud first’ strategy if possible, but the firm was mindful that the overall total cost of ownership also needed to be considered. After attending a Nutanix event and hearing about the capabilities of the Nutanix hyperconverged Infrastructure (HCI) platform, key members of Shakespeare Martineau’s IT team put it forward as a potential solution that met their requirements. The Nutanix platform offered all the abilities of a public ‘cloud first’ strategy, combined with the security, performance and compliance needed from an on-premises private cloud solution.

“From a technological perspective, being able to reduce the complexity around support and management was absolutely a key incentive to consider the Nutanix platform and how that could help us move forward, and being able to leverage their Xi Leap disaster recovery,” Virdi says.

However, there was a certain amount of caution from the firm, as Nutanix did not yet have a comparable reference deployment within the legal industry that it could point to. To get over this hurdle, Nutanix offered Shakespeare Martineau a “try before you buy” deployment which the firm could trial for a duration before committing itself.

"Nutanix did everything it possibly could to support our deliberations around making a decision. The accounts team has been very supportive through what's been a difficult time trying to make sure the contracts reflected what we needed," Virdi adds.

Following the trial deployment, which comprised three nodes, Shakespeare Martineau decided to proceed with a procurement of eighteen nodes, split between an active cluster at one site and a passive cluster at a second site that replicates the first for disaster recovery.

The firm opted to configure its Nutanix infrastructure as all-flash nodes, in order to ensure the highest level of performance for its legal applications.

"The reason we did that is to guarantee performance when people need it," says Flint. "With compression and dedupe built into the Nutanix platform, you need less disk capacity. So it actually works out at a reasonably comparable price to having spinning disks, but with significantly better performance."

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Shakespeare Martineau is now migrating all of its IT services onto Nutanix infrastructure.

The firm is satisfied that it has made the right decision for its new cloud platform requirements, particularly around performance and reducing the complexity of managing it all.

"Nutanix is very, very simple to administrate and use compared with other technologies and cloud-based strategies, plus we get higher performance with Nutanix and at a reduced cost," explains Flint.

Shakespeare Martineau opted for the Ultimate edition of the Nutanix software platform, which provides the full suite of capabilities to tackle complex infrastructure challenges, especially for multi-site deployments.

"We went for the Ultimate version of software for an enhanced disaster recovery position. But Ultimate also offers you extra capabilities, such as the ability to monitor inside SQL and what it's doing on your Nutanix hardware. So you can see how SQL is performing at a database level on Nutanix hardware without the need of a highly skilled DBA," says Flint.

NEXT STEPS

The firm's IT team will be exploring all the capabilities of the Nutanix platform, and looking at whether any add-in capabilities may be required to meet their requirements.

"We are wedded to Nutanix because of its web-scale technology. Part of the attraction of Nutanix is that as you add more nodes, you get more performance, so as we grow, the performance keeps pace with us. And that's really important to us as a highly ambitious law firm," explains Flint.



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