



RACQ unlocks the potential of a hybrid cloud with Nutanix

RACQ increases IT speed and flexibility while complying with financial services regulations and reduces IT costs by AU\$500,000 (US\$360,000)

BUSINESS BENEFIT

RACQ couldn't go all in on a public cloud strategy because of regulations on financial services data. Still, it wanted to retire its legacy data center infrastructure, which was unable to support the flexibility and speed the business was looking for. RACQ took a hybrid cloud approach, implementing a Nutanix Enterprise Cloud, running on a hyperconverged infrastructure, to give the business the agility it wanted while remaining compliant. With Nutanix, RACQ has gained a solution to manage both public and private cloud workloads, reducing

“Our Nutanix hybrid cloud enables us to successfully leverage a cloud strategy for financial services—using public or private cloud platforms depending on the needs of the workload.”

– Ben Johnston, General Manager Security and Shared ICT Services, RACQ

INDUSTRY

Financial services

BENEFITS

- Eliminates complexity across the IT landscape
- Allows homeworking during COVID-19 without any additional investment
- Applies security patches in one day instead of weeks
- Liberates IT staff to work on high value tasks
- Enables requests for new environments in one instead of 4-5 days
- Maximizes application performance
- Saves AU\$500,000 (US\$360,000) over the next five years
- Reduces hardware by 77.5%, lowering carbon footprint

SOLUTIONS

- Nutanix Enterprise Cloud OS

APPLICATIONS

- Business critical applications
- Microsoft SQL Server

complexity and increasing IT efficiency. It is developing a common application programming interface (API) to move workloads between clouds easily and has the capacity to scale performance—as happened with COVID-19 and the new need for homeworking. Management tasks take much less time, new environments can be spun in a day, and the organization will save AU\$500,000 (US\$360,000) over the next five years, while lowering its carbon footprint, thanks to 77.5 percent less hardware in the data center.

CHALLENGE

The Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ) is a motoring club and financial services organization, and one of Queensland's most recognized businesses. Established in 1905, RACQ has evolved to become a multidimensional organization offering motoring, insurance, banking, and travel products. It employs more than 2,200 people across 50 locations and has a membership of more than 1.7 million.

With RACQ's portfolio continuing to evolve to this day, the business wanted to increase the agility of its IT to help the business respond to change and new opportunities. The company began moving workloads from on-premises hardware to the AWS public cloud, which offered greater flexibility and the chance to use application programming interfaces (APIs) to reduce build time for new services. However, it was clear the public cloud couldn't meet RACQ's entire business requirements. Ben Johnston, General Manager Security and Shared ICT services at RACQ, explains, "In financial services there are multiple regulations for our different types of data where the public cloud isn't the answer right now. There is always going to be some data that needs to stay on premises."

The only way to retain the agility of the cloud and API-based infrastructure across its entire IT was through a hybrid cloud solution. The possibilities from a hybrid cloud were substantial. RACQ could retire a sizeable proportion of the hardware powering its on-premises legacy infrastructure. It could improve the performance of its applications and attack the significant amount of management time currently being invested in the legacy systems. Better still, it could redirect that management resource to higher-value tasks and drive service development.

SOLUTION

"We considered all the options available and it really came down to a few key players in the hybrid cloud space," says Johnston. "We chose Nutanix because it delivered on the reduced footprint, performance, and manageability criteria. It gave us the freedom to take a system-led approach over our cloud migration strategy. Essentially, we could allocate workloads to our public or Nutanix Enterprise Cloud based on the data requirements."

RACQ worked with Nutanix partner MOQdigital to implement the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud, complete with its hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI). At this point, RACQ began migrating the virtual machines running business-critical applications, backed by a Microsoft SQL Server database, over to Nutanix. Comments Johnston, "We are now bringing a cloud management mentality to our data center."

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Eliminating complexity across the IT landscape, ensuring flexibility

RACQ today is a more agile business through its hybrid solution with Nutanix. Soon the IT team will be able to move workloads between the data center and the public cloud seamlessly. Recounts Johnston, “We are building the business logic so that if, for example, you want a non-production insurance environment it automatically goes to this location [the public cloud]. But if you want a production-insurance environment, it goes to another location [Nutanix Enterprise Cloud].” With the hybrid cloud solution, the team can also develop a set of common operational and troubleshooting practices for private and public cloud environments simplifying administration further.

The flexibility of the hybrid cloud became clear when RACQ had to start working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. “We had to make zero changes to our infrastructure footprint because our Nutanix solution gave the scalability to flex up performance and throughput we needed from day one,” remembers Johnston. “The infrastructure ran flawlessly.”

Apply security patches in one day instead of weeks

The IT team has freed up time to focus on how technology can better support the business. It’s done so by simplifying essential management tasks. Johnston says, “Security updates on our old platforms took weeks, but now updates are completed in a day with our Nutanix Enterprise Cloud. It’s given us time to work on our APIs. We no longer need a dedicated infrastructure management team. We’ve definitely started to move away from just being able to do the routine work.”

IT requests turned around in one day instead of 4-5 days

The IT for new projects or initiatives can be launched inside 24 hours, thanks to Nutanix. Comments Johnston, “Our main internal customers are the development teams. A request comes in and we spend a bit of time on provisioning the infrastructure. With our hybrid cloud, it takes nowhere near so long as it used to—our turnaround target is now a day when it could be 4-5 in the past.”

Maximizing application performance

The flexibility of the hybrid cloud solution also enables RACQ to allocate workloads to whichever platform offers the best capabilities for that use case. For instance, it is building a data lake on the public cloud, taking advantage of the huge volumes of low-cost storage available. Plus, the public cloud gives RACQ the burst-out capability to quickly ramp up resources in the event of a natural disaster that suddenly puts pressure on internal systems. Likewise, if the workloads require low latency, round-the-clock availability, and need to stay on-premises, the IT team has the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud. “Speed and availability are crucial for many of our systems, and the metrics are really good at the moment,” says Johnston.

AU\$500,000 saving over the next five years

Besides gaining additional speed and flexibility, RACQ is making substantial cost saving from its Nutanix solution. Over the next five years, the organization expects to save AU\$500,000 (US\$360,000) on the licensing and management costs of its legacy architecture—potentially releasing funds to invest in service development.

A 77.5% reduction in racks, lowering carbon footprint

As part of the cost reduction, RACQ has been able to consolidate the data center's hardware footprint. "Instead of having a data center full of 20 racks, we have just four and a half," comments Johnston. "We needed months to make all hardware updates and firmware fixes across all those racks, but now it's a lot easier and takes a week." Besides simplifying management, the reduction is also helping lower the data center's power and cooling costs, in turn, reducing RACQ's carbon footprint.

NEXT STEPS

The IT team continues working on a common API for both public and private cloud environments. Once completed, it will increase the speed and flexibility of RACQ's IT and the agility of the business. The company plans to look at Nutanix Calm to streamline the orchestration of applications across its cloud environments. Overall, the IT landscape will evolve at pace for some time to come. RACQ is working with Telstra on ways to leverage 5G for high bandwidth, low latency mobile apps, and the organization is integrating machine learning and artificial intelligence with its enterprise data. "We are using technology to operate in smarter ways and deliver more value to our customers," says Johnston. "Our hybrid cloud is central to all of that."



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