

How to Power Future ICT Innovation Energy Action

Agile Microsoft Azure ICT infrastructure gives Energy Action the scalable tools it needs to develop new innovative solutions while managing costs.

Energy Action is an independent energy management firm offering energy broker services to businesses, government organisations, and non-profits across Australia.

With a targeted technology investment, its leadership team felt that Energy Action would have the infrastructure to scale up a revolution in the energy procurement category where it is a dominant player. Infrastructure advances consisted of:

- ✓ Consolidate server resources.
- ✓ Explore network upgrade opportunities.
- ✓ Investigate unified communications solutions.

Checking internal IT capacity

As part of their internal governance, Energy Action undertook an audit of its IT capacity. The audit identified multiple IT services sourced from third-party vendors, with each service managed internally.

The intent behind the outsourcing decision was to help manage costs. But new directives saw the energy broker develop an internal team of software engineers to start developing a range of proprietary tech solutions – new assets for the business's future.

The challenge was to find appropriate IT infrastructure that enabled legacy application support, new application development, and support initiatives in a way that allowed for rapid responses to changing demands. With multiple vendors, this was impossible, as each vendor had a separate support system that didn't always play well with others. The result was that Energy Action found it hard to control their IT infrastructure, rendering short-term scaling unfeasible.

Defining the gold standard

Energy Action sought to transition towards an environment that let its team own and control their infrastructure, allowing for faster development and agile responses to changing demands.

Solution Design Manager at Energy Action Bruce Macfarlane explains: "For us to be a leader, we've got to have the agility of cloud-based infrastructure."

We took the risk of growing our internal capability. And we wanted to make sure that risk paid off. ”

Identifying barriers to operational efficiency

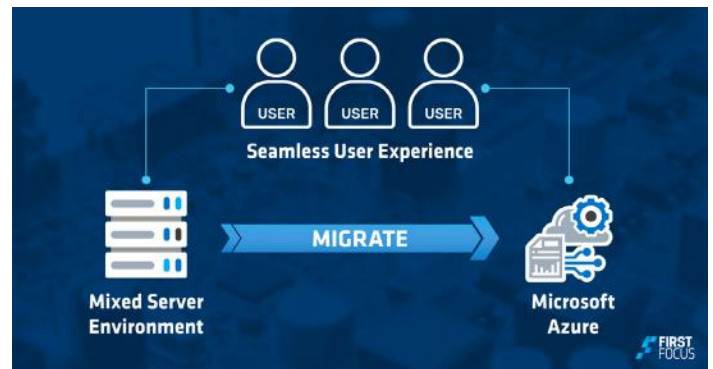
In early 2020, Energy Action completed a new customer relationship management (CRM) implementation. This rollout allowed the company to rethink service delivery and what their ideal operational model looked like. In 2020 Energy Action then re-built its technology team to make software development part of their DNA.

A key hire for Energy Action was the appointment of Clint Irving as Chief Technology Officer. With Irving's selection, the company actively started to manage vendor relationships. Making choices about the vendors that were going to support Energy Action achieve their target solution architecture.

Energy Action worked with First Focus to begin [consolidating its IT infrastructure](#). It migrated to Microsoft 365, and in the process, found several services and solutions that didn't match their new operational model. Once switched off, Energy

Action had more space in the budget for further valuable investments.

The next step was server migration and consolidation. Energy Action had previously operated with a mixed server model that included on-premises hardware with public and private cloud deployments. This model did not give the company the agile infrastructure needed to allow its internal teams to develop new and improved solutions. It decided to switch from a hybrid deployment to a [cloud server environment](#) in Azure.



The transition was not an easy task, as the company stored some of its proprietary data and applications on disparate servers that were hard to access. First Focus was able to identify the asset locations and developed a method of consolidating them into a single environment, streamlining the migration and future access.

"The uplift of the servers and applications was executed with surgical precision. I was extremely pleased with how this tracked to plan" says Irving.

1300 556 531
sales@firstfocus.com.au
www.firstfocus.com.au

Consolidation cuts costs and improves control.

Energy Action can now scale its IT resources up and down in response to its needs. Its internal teams now have complete control over the environment they need for their proprietary projects.

The development teams can access the resources they need on an on-demand basis, allowing projects to progress without waiting for additional hardware.

Irving states: "While we had a fair idea of what the impacts of migration would be in the process of moving, we really shook the IT tree. Some things fell out that we didn't know existed. But we were still able to lift and shift to Azure whilst continuing to run the day-to-day operations."

It was like building a multimillion-dollar project for a per cent of the cost.



"It was a seamless transition. All because we had a highly agile, closely integrated partnership between Energy Action and First Focus."

The ability to scale resources has also let Energy Action manage its costs more effectively, saving the organisation hundreds of thousands of dollars each financial year.

Network Improvements

Energy Action also found inefficiencies in its network infrastructure. While the organisation had previously been happy with its wide-area network (WAN) solution, it was eager to see how new technological developments might improve its capacities and reduce cost.

Building a better network

First Focus reviewed Energy Action's network infrastructure and found that a software-defined wide area network (SD-WAN) would simplify operations by decoupling control from the networking hardware to improve operations and management processes.

The SD-WAN could shift priority traffic to high-speed connections like fibre while sending lower-ranked packets through more cost-effective links.

Closing the system gap

Energy Action is planning a network infrastructure refresh that will significantly enhance communications and collaboration opportunities between the organisation's locations.

Macfarlane explains: "It will be like moving from the 1970s to a normal high-grade communications network."

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Energy Action's business outcomes.

- ✓ Better financial control over flexible, scalable resources.
- ✓ Azure-based cloud server environment enables cost-effective testing environments.
- ✓ New SD-WAN offers improved connectivity and infrastructure management.
- ✓ Unified communications project to enhance collaboration opportunities.
- ✓ ICT management and planning programs receive professional support.

Planning for the future.

First Focus is investigating ideal unified communications solutions for Energy Action. The combined projects will allow Energy Action to merge its communications activities across voice, video, messaging, and telephony while also [integrating Microsoft Teams](#).

Energy Action is now able to take on future projects without worrying about its IT capacity. With the delivery of its [unified communications](#) platform, the organisation will be ready to build and grow with First Focus's support.

We couldn't have done it without the help of the professionals at First Focus.



Macfarlane says that on a personal level, First Focus delivered a sense of calm that gave them confidence: "Our technical account manager patiently dealt with every issue. The migration was a challenging process because of various technical setups. But communications were clear, and First Focus hit its deadlines."

On the outcomes gained by Energy Action, Macfarlane says that trust was "key" going into the relationship and that the full-service solutions made available by First Focus delivered "high-quality" support.

"Our environment is flexible now. It supports testing new solutions on-demand, and we can turn things on and off in the cloud as needed."

Want more from your IT infrastructure?

See how you can consolidate and manage your IT environment for better strategic outcomes.

The graphic features a blue and white geometric design with a background image of a modern building's glass facade. The text is overlaid on a dark blue triangular shape.

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