Preparing for a More Sustainable IT Environment: How Codify and GCCEC are Planning Ahead for an Azure Hybrid Cloud Migration

As Australia's largest regional convention centre, the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCCEC) in Queensland delivers major domestic and international business events over its 15,000m² of event space. However, delivering events to notable tech industry businesses including Gartner and Microsoft puts GCCEC in an unusual position.

"One unique part of managing technology in a convention centre is that the product that we use internally is also part of our service offering," explains Ben Morris, GCCEC's Executive Manager for Technology. "We offer turnkey IT technology services to our event clients. When conference delegates travel from all around the world to attend our conventions, they need to be able to access the same level of technology they would get back home."

As GCCEC approached an upcoming replacement of its on-prem server assets, Morris recognised an opportunity to begin investigating more sustainable solutions. The unexpected downtime resulting from COVID lockdowns also gave the team time to think critically about its options. As Morris notes, "Our core business is to host gatherings of people, and that's been one of the most restricted elements during COVID. Our business was one of the first affected back in 2020, but it has given us a unique opportunity to progress our technology without impacting business."

> " Every vendor that we have needs to be able to provide a world-class standard, and that's something Codify do. "

CODIFY

Considering a Hybrid Environment

Initially, Morris explains, GCCEC didn't have much of a view either way about potential paths forward. "We have a lot of SaaS applications, so cloud was an obvious consideration," he states. "But we needed to take a more holistic approach. We'll always have an on-prem environment because we're a convention centre and we offer IT networking to our clients. There's always going to be a component that needs to be on-premise for that."

Morris had initially been in contact with David Connors, Managing Director at Codify, through work Connors had done with some of GCCEC's biggest clients. Recognising the need for additional skill and knowledge, Morris engaged Connors to workshop the Centre's options. "Our on-site IT team is fantastic at delivering the day-to-day needs of our business. But looking at a cloud migration strategy requires a skillset that we didn't have. Knowing that our on-prem server assets were due for replacement in 12-18 months made it worthwhile for us to start that conversation."

Addressing Cloud Risks and Concerns

Morris quickly saw the value a cloud journey to Microsoft Azure could have for GCCEC. "Commercially, it's a different proposition than having a large capital investment every 5-7 years on a data centre or server environment on-premise," he shares. "Azure and Managed Azure products will give us an operational expense that we can tune up and down monthly, based on our needs. Overall, we'll have less outlay and a more manageable infrastructure-as-a-service on the backend."

That said, Morris wasn't without concerns about transitioning to a hybrid environment. He explains, "Straightaway, we worried about how to control costs. And if you start using more resources, how do you keep some governance around that? Codify gave us a real sense of comfort that these things would be reviewed, and that there's a cloud governance process we'd go through on a quarterly basis to make sure that we're optimised and that the billing process has everything broken down in a way that we can understand."

Ultimately, Morris recognised that Microsoft Azure could offer a more sustainable alternative to a fully on-prem environment. "Having an Azure computing environment covers off that lifecycle replacement requirement. Rather than looking at a hardware replacement model — where you replace your data centre and you have the best-of-the-best in year one, and then by year five, six and seven, you're dealing with the limitation of old hardware — Azure is just more sustainable."

Driving Savings Early On

Though work with Codify has only recently begun, GCCEC is already seeing an impact. According to Morris, "The first part of our process was to review our Microsoft licensing. We've already seen up to $6,000 per annum savings, just in approaching that Microsoft licensing with a more critical eye and a better understanding of what we need. Our previous vendor was happy to send us a quote every year based on our users, but Codify has really been doing the due diligence about opportunities for savings there."

As the GCCEC team moves further into its migration work, Morris is confident the team will be well supported by Codify. "I have complete confidence in what Codify has shown us and how they've analysed our resources," he states. "They ask the right questions and have taken the time to genuinely understand our business and its unique needs. The technical knowledge is expected, but their empathy and commercial understanding is what sets Codify apart for us."

If your organisation would benefit from Codify's cloud migration expertise, reach out to our team of cloud specialists to begin a conversation.

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