

HORNBY HOBBIES CUSTOMER STORY

Hornby Hobbies enhances performance and flexibility while achieving cost efficiencies by hosting its Microsoft Dynamics AX estate in the Six Degrees Enterprise Cloud.

Hornby Hobbies develops, manufactures and supplies hobby and toy products for a global market, with a collection of truly iconic brands spanning model railways, slot racing, die-cast models and plastic model kits. Hornby Hobbies' brands include such household names as Hornby, Airfix and Scalextric.

Challenge

Hornby Hobbies (Hornby) is a household name in the UK, and its brands including Hornby, Airfix and Scalextric have been synonymous with hobby and toy products for generations. With hundreds of stockists around the UK, a highly effective Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tool is vital to the operation of Hornby's business.

Hornby uses Microsoft's ERP tool, Dynamics AX, to manage its operations. Prior to engaging with Six Degrees, Hornby needed its application hosting environment to be migrated to a new platform that provided improved stability, performance and security.

Tim Best, AX Developer, Hornby Hobbies, says: "AX is our enterprise resource planning software. It manages all of our customers, suppliers, warehousing, web orders, and demand forecasting. It is the system that runs our business; absolutely everything goes through AX. We had two primary challenges. Firstly, we were hosted by a company in Spain. We wanted to bring hosting back into the UK to have it closer to home. Secondly, we wanted to go to a company that could provide us with the level of support that we need. We don't need a vast amount of day-to-day interaction, but when something goes wrong it goes wrong in a big way. We needed a company with the man power to be able to help us quickly. Additionally, we wanted to work with somebody who would work with us proactively, not reactively."

Solution

After a competitive tender process, Hornby chose to host its Dynamics AX platform in the Six Degrees Enterprise Cloud. The solution consisted of a transition from Hornby's previous cloud platform to Six Degrees' Enterprise Cloud platform, along with a transformation of how the service was provided as new backup and disaster recovery architecture and processes were deployed for the protection of Hornby's operations.

Advantages and Benefits



Flexibility of the Enterprise Cloud.

Hornby Hobbies can cope with fluctuations in demand by increasing and decreasing resources easily and quickly in the Enterprise Cloud.



Dynamics AX Performance.

Hornby has experienced performance improvements in Dynamics AX, enabling its people to maximise productivity.



Proactive Service Wrap.

Six Degrees' proactive service approach enables Hornby to identify and address infrastructure issues before they become service-affecting.



Achieving Cost Efficiencies.

By taking a holistic approach to reviewing Hornby's systems, Six Degrees will propose best practice methods to enable Hornby to achieve cost efficiencies.

Six Degrees enabled the transformation of Hornby's service to the new delivery model by providing initial audit and due diligence activities, followed by project and programme management delivered by a PRINCE2 accredited Project Manager, implementation and transition management, and finally a post-transition review.

As Tim explains: "We were working to quite aggressive timescales. After the tender process, we only had three months from discussing low level design to when Hornby Hobbies wanted to go live. This is quite a tight timescale for an ERP project. In about four weeks we had all of our servers up and running, which was impressive. Our AX platform support partners then had three weeks to configure those servers, we had four weeks of testing, and then we were ready for go-live a week early. And all done remotely during lockdown!"

Tim is complimentary about the Six Degrees team that worked on the project: "Working with the Six Degrees team has been great. They have been really informative, supportive and proactive, which has been really good for us.

"The team's ability to say 'no' or 'I don't know' has been, ironically, really refreshing. They haven't tried to tell us they can do everything – instead, they have been quite clear in communicating what they can and can't do. We then fully understand what is our responsibility and what isn't. This inspires quite a lot of confidence, because when they say 'yes' to something, we know they can do it."

Outcome

By transitioning its Dynamics AX platform to the Six Degrees Enterprise Cloud, Hornby has enhanced its performance and flexibility while achieving cost efficiencies and receiving a proactive service that saves Hornby's people time and mitigates the impact of infrastructure issues.

Tim says: "With our old provider we had to tell them when a server was down. With you guys, we have proactive monitoring, a 24x7 support desk, and if there is an incident that has been raised because a server has gone down or we've breached a threshold, somebody is there proactively monitoring it so that we don't run into the big issues that we were running into. Previously, if servers went down batch jobs wouldn't complete, the next batch job wouldn't then run on time with all the data that it needed, so then the reporting might be off for a couple of days – all because one server dropped at the beginning. Whereas now those servers are coming back on, so those incidents don't happen. It saves us a lot of time spending our day firefighting.

"Our old system began to creak at the seams. It was very slow, which was the main driver for the upgrade. We were getting more customers and orders coming in the first quarter of 2020 than we usually get annually. The system was struggling.

"Now the infrastructure is fast, we are running at 30% capacity, we've got proactive monitoring, and since going live the number of issues we have had has just plummeted, which has been great. We have not had people complaining about speed – we do have normal issues, but all the things that were caused by the system being slow have gone."

Hornby has realised a number of benefits through working with Six Degrees. "We have more time" explains Tim. "We are no longer firefighting as much as we used to. We still have some issues, but they are not infrastructure issues – they are AX application issues that we knew we were going to have anyway. We are able to be more proactive. It has been nice that we no longer worry about our infrastructure – if there's an issue, somebody tells us, and the issues are so few and far between that we just don't notice. That's the benefit. It works.

"The speed of the system has increased, so we don't get as many user complaints. One other benefit is that we have an AX issue where overnight jobs lock. The solution is to increase the CPU capacity on our SQL boxes for three months. Because we are with you guys, we now have that flexibility. The fact that we can just say 'for three months we want all this extra performance' is something we could never do before, and it gives us that ability to scale up and scale down as and when our demand needs it. It's not a big project. That's one of the real benefits, because we don't have to worry. Flexibility is one of things that it gives us."



Our Solutions



Cloud Platform & Data

Modernise your data centre and secure your hybrid cloud future.



Cyber Security & Compliance

Enhance your cyber security posture and safeguard your organisation.



Agile Workspace

Communicate, collaborate and work efficiently, anywhere.



Network Infrastructure

Achieve a step change in your connectivity and your digital transformation journeys.



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The Future

Hornby and Six Degrees are working collaboratively to add even more proactive elements to the service. “Six Degrees is going to look holistically at how we use our system, where we may have bottlenecks and how we can allocate our resource pool to even out our demand. If we don’t need as much resource, then it’s a cost saving to Hornby Hobbies that we don’t have to do anything for. If there is a bottleneck and we can shift some resource, then having our infrastructure proactively monitored tells us how we can make ourselves more efficient without me having to do anything, which is great. It is really nice to have someone actually live up to the marketing.”

About Six Degrees

Isn’t it time you enjoyed all the game-changing potential of cloud, and more?

You can, when you partner Six Degrees. Because we offer managed cloud services the way they should be. Creating a secure, flexible platform that sets you free to achieve and exceed your boldest aspirations, whatever those may be.

Work in partnership with our strategic cloud experts, and experience how cloud can become your springboard to the future. Where your business is safeguarded by industry-leading protection against cyber threats. And all underpinned by our formal service assurance.

So choose a partner who will be there for you no matter where you are on your journey. And whose resilience brings you less risk, and way more reward.

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