

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT WITH SUPPORT FROM SOFTCAT

Datcentre



Networking & security



Professional services



First UK cloud service provider

First class response times

Worked as a genuine partner

to offer IL3 data protection for public sector

with expert advice and technology recommendations

sharing the UKCloud vision and goals

UKCloud is the service provider of choice for Assured Cloud Services to the UK Public Sector. Offering a truly scalable service, their multi-tenanted cloud solutions help lower UK Public Sector costs and enable the government's Digital by Default agenda. Following the Government Procurement Service's announcement of the G-Cloud framework to enable more competitiveness between service providers and foster new market entrants, UKCloud has established itself as a prominent player in the market, through best-in-class services at the most affordable prices.

The Challenge

Built on the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) best practice, UKCloud delivers solutions based upon three cloud service models: Infrastructure-as-a-Service, consisting of compute and storage on-demand; Platform-as-a-Service, enabling rapid scalability of applications; and Software-as-a-Service, consisting of web based applications like email. Using best of breed vBlock technology from Cisco, EMC and VMware purpose - built for cloud-based service provision - and wrapped in a layer of protection and monitoring from MOD spin-off Qinetiq, UKCloud has built a state-of-the-art environment to provide highly secure multitenanted solutions.

To deliver these services requires a massive investment in technology and an ability to respond to customer requirements fast. Whilst still an emerging business, UKCloud quickly realised that they would need a seasoned IT partner able to support them in the acquisition and deployment of the technology they would need. With proven experience of working with Softcat, Chief Executive Phil Dawson drafted in their skills to provide the project by project support UKCloud would require.

"Whilst we conduct most of the design work in conjunction with our major vendors, we needed the help of an expert partner for advice and recommendations on the specific products to use to get the performance, availability and capacity characteristics we look for on any given project," explains David Booton, Product Marketing Manager at UKCloud.

Similarly, the typically tight timescales required to build and deploy new solutions for Skyscape's customers meant their chosen partner needed to possess some important attributes. Crucially, they needed to understand what UKCloud were trying to achieve with their business and secondly they had to have the respect of UKCloud's vendors to get the best possible results and achieve everything from better discount to improved delivery terms.

The Solution

Realising the importance of the task being asked of them, Softcat took time to understand the UKCloud business model, objectives and projects anticipated to tailor a service that would meet all their technology sourcing needs plus provide the other support required to deploy the cloud infrastructure they envisaged.

Charged with the significant remit of technology sourcing Michael Walker, Account Director at Softcat, explains their role, "We work with UKCloud on an on-going basis and have supported them on a number of important projects including migrating a host of public sector websites to the UKCloud fabric. Our primary role has been to scrutinise designs and challenge assumptions, before recommending the best products to meet the design based on requirements but also taking into account equipment lead times; all without compromising on functionality".

As such, Softcat has played a very influential role in helping UKCloud build their cloud infrastructure, sourcing and delivering a range of compute, network and storage technologies plus navigating complex software licensing schemes and providing periphery technology and services especially surrounding the network layer.

The Benefits

Timing is all important to UKCloud as missing deadlines can compromise commitments made on their contracts, so rapid response is essential. David Booton explains, "Softcat's responsiveness is incredible in the face of what can be ridiculous timescales. We're constructing the best cloud computing platform for the public sector in the world, yet we're doing it under incredible pressure and within a fraction of the time that any reasonable company would propose! Time and again, Softcat responds emphatically to these demands."

Delivering flexible on-demand services also means UKCloud needs to leverage notoriously complex consumption-based software licensing from its chosen vendors. With a rich heritage in this domain, Softcat has offered valuable support assisting Skyscape in negotiating their agreement terms to secure the best value from their licensing arrangements. David Booton, continues, "If you don't understand licensing models it's easy to end up in hot water with the vendors. Softcat know this stuff inside out and are fast to respond with the help I need when I need it. The guidance they provide is critical to our own business model helping us to save money and translating into the pricing for the various services we offer."

Likewise, Softcat has also worked hard to negotiate favourable commercial terms from UKCloud's vendors ensuring they always get best value when acquiring the technology needed. This saves the business considerably when investing - something particularly important to a growing business, made possible only by the standing Softcat has with the stakeholders involved. This also helps turn-around times for new equipment which can be as little as one week. The deep links Softcat has with UKCloud vendors pays major dividends in speeding up the processes required to obtain the equipment and resources needed. The knowledge Softcat brings to bear in these matters is welcomed according to David Booton "They know the functionality of the technology being sourced and how alternatives might benefit us. The importance of their role in this regard cannot be underestimated."

Finally, Softcat has impressed with their attention to detail which is critical in helping things come together as UKCloud need. "It's easy to think of the sourcing as a simple procurement task but UKCloud's data centres are so secure, even getting things to site on time is not easy. They have to overcome everything from pre-notified number plates and named drivers for delivery vehicles, to closely monitoring product lead times from factories," comments David Booton.

Why Softcat?

"Without doubt Softcat is a key partner for us and has been very supportive in everything we have sought to achieve. Few partners have the passion, knowledge and responsiveness, we enjoy working with them" claims David Booton.

The support Softcat has offered UKCloud has stretched beyond IT services and supply however, as Phil Dawson attests, "Softcat has been sensitive to the fact that we're still an emerging business albeit one growing rapidly, and the very favourable commercial terms they offered all the way through demonstrates a shared commitment and confidence in our vision. In this way, they've been much more than just a supplier, truly partnering with us for mutual success."

He concludes that the future for UKCloud is promising, "We're a highly ambitious company and believe our rapid growth will continue at an even faster rate. The support that Softcat has offered to date only looks set to continue and become more important to our business as we move forward."

At a Glance

- Negotiated best-in-class commercial arrangements with vendors
- Met on-going and incredibly tight timescales

- Offered valuable cost savings on consumption pricing for software needed
- Worked as a genuine partner, sharing the UKCloud vision

Critical Success Factors

- First class response times for technology sourcing
- Expert advice and technology recommendations
- Deep links into primary vendor community

Key Facts

- Provider of Assured Cloud Services to the UK Public Sector
- Rapidly growing business
- Held up by government CIO as a beacon for cloud-service delivery in Public Sector
- UK company, UK accredited, UK data centres
- First UK Cloud Service Provider to offer IL3 data protection for Public Sector organisations

Solution Highlights

- Technology sourcing across a range of disciplines including server, storage and networking
- Continually challenging design assumptions to ensure best possible outcomes
- Assistance in negotiating complex software licensing arrangements for maximum benefit