



GERRIE

An Advisory Services
Customer Story:

WatServ supports Gerrie Electric from strategy to execution of its digital transformation



WatServ 

Gerrie Electric is the largest independent electrical distributor in Canada

Gerrie Electric is a successful Canadian-owned company with a sterling reputation built on service. Founded in 1957, Gerrie is a third-generation, family-run business with annual sales over \$200 million. As the largest independent electrical distributor in Canada, it initially relied on two on-premises data centres to power the business.

Plugging Security Holes with an Azure Roadmap

With the equipment for its on-premises data reaching end of life, Gerrie Electric was concerned about data breaches, hackers and ransomware. As an online e-commerce company, its paramount concern was protecting customer data. Gerrie Electric had already embraced some smaller SaaS applications and realized that the right cloud might offer better protection.

WatServ reached out to Greg Patchev, Director of IT, Gerrie Electric, and initiated a discussion about how WatServ has helped other clients with similar requirements.

With infrastructure at two data centres nearing end of life, escalating software licensing costs and concerns about data security, Gerrie Electric turned to WatServ for help. The result was a dramatic digital transformation that saw Gerrie realize cost savings of up to 90% per workload, consolidate and streamline licensing costs, and integrate a \$200 million e-Commerce operation onto Azure without any business disruption.



I think it's the combination of those three things [honesty and fixed price, clarity on what and how to do it, and post-project assessment] that really made it a unique experience. Sometimes you get one or two of those things from a partner, but getting all of it from a single partner without any of the hassles and really feeling like they cared about what I was going through and understanding that, 'hey, I have to go to owners and I have to go to other VPs and explain what's going on.' And just being there to support me – it was a fantastic experience.



Greg Patchev

Director of IT, Gerrie Electric

“We started to think about how difficult or expensive it might be to look at building a cloud roadmap and to understand if the cloud would be cost effective. We simply weren’t sure what the costs and the benefits might be – if they even existed,” said Greg Patchev, Director of IT, Gerrie Electric.

Much of Gerrie Electric’s on-premises infrastructure needed to be replaced. WatServ recommended an application and infrastructure assessment so that Gerrie Electric could clearly understand the risks, benefits, and costs of moving from on-premises to Azure.

“What I like about [the WatServ team] is that they are very good and not too intrusive. They were respectful of our time, spoke in a language we could understand, and clearly articulated how the process was going to work, how they could help, and what we would have at the end,” continued Patchev.

Patchev gave high marks to WatServ for finding the funding for an advisory service at an all-inclusive price. There were no hidden fees, scope changes or unexpected add-ons.

Gerrie Electric – By the Numbers

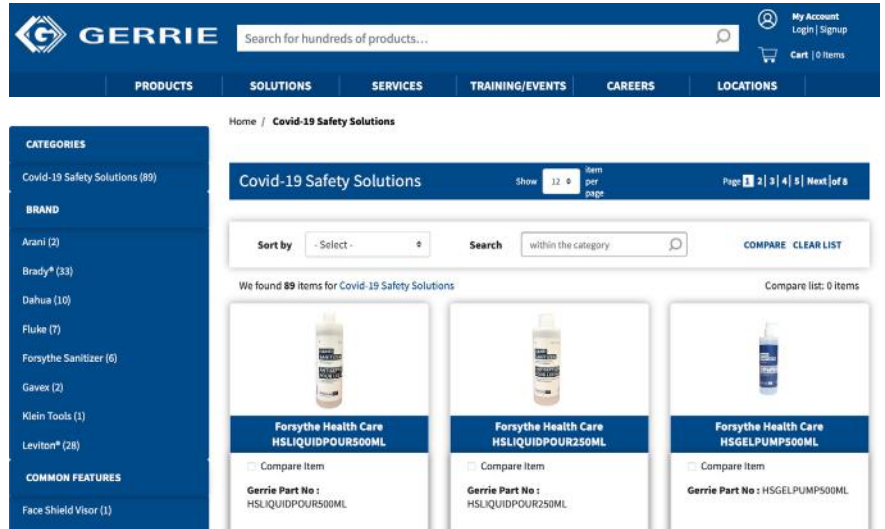
- Cost savings per workload – up to 90%
- e-Commerce revenues integrated on Azure - \$200M
- Workloads migrated – 20
- Workloads planned for migration – 20
- Data centres retired – 1

WatServ Advisory Services Value to Gerrie Electric

- Clear and concise methodology
- Assessment dollars/Fixed price – no upsell
- Non-intrusive process – limited Gerrie staff time needed
- Consistent knowledge transfer
- Increased self-sufficiency and confidence in cloud
- Significant reduction in licensing costs
- Post-assessment process at no charge – WatServ reviewed all work, identifying remaining needs and providing additional knowledge transfer

WatServ Advisory Services

The services delivered to Gerrie Electric looked at existing technology, software and licensing, and short- and long-term business goals. It was clear that growth was being fuelled by online orders. Gerrie Electric is a primary distributor for COVID equipment used by professionals, and with the increase in deliveries and curb-side pick-up, the ability to scale up and down to meet demand was crucial. WatServ also discovered many licensing discrepancies with older, unsupported versions of software (such as SQL Server), duplicate CALs, and redundant or unpatched servers.



WatServ demonstrated to Gerrie Electric how migration would transform the business. Gerrie Electric had requirements to run Dev workloads more efficiently with TCO, which was a key issue. Azure solved these business and technical requirements by hosting the infrastructure and building automated scaling to optimize for uptime and other key metrics. WatServ also built a TCO/Cost Analysis dashboard within Gerrie Electric’s Azure tenant. Gerrie Electric was spurred on by CAPEX avoidance and the shift to OPEX. Seeing the savings with Azure compared to running on-premises, they knew it was the right choice.



WatServ was instrumental in moving Gerrie Electric into Azure. The customer previously had no interest in utilizing Azure services, but WatServ was able to meet where the customer was and build a strong trust relationship with the key IT decision makers. WatServ has opened the doors to new workloads including a large infrastructure migration project and IoT.



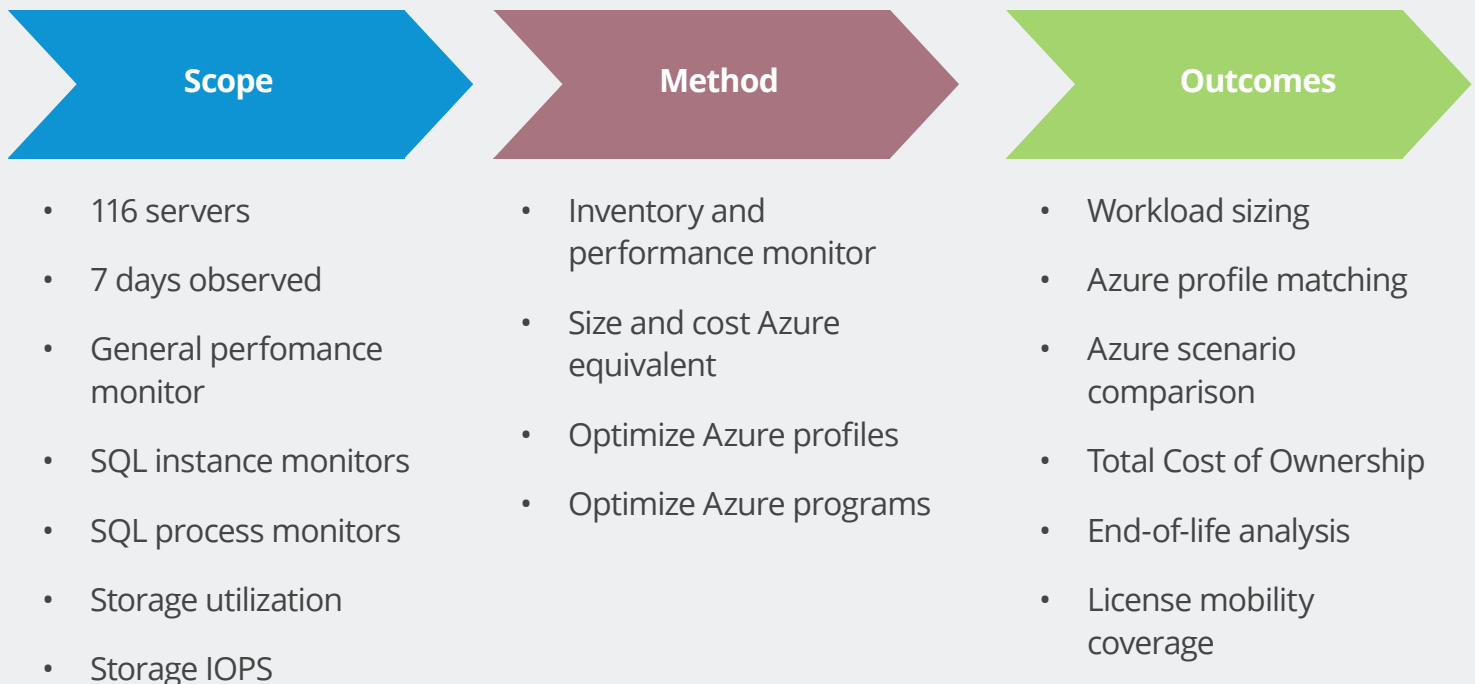
Sandy Chen
Microsoft Solutions Specialist

WatServ worked with the Microsoft Assessment Desk and used the Block 64 proven methodology for the initial assessment, providing advice on migrating the on-premises servers to Azure. They applied for End Customer Investment Funds (ECIF) to provide the assessment and first POC migration, so the initial engagements with Gerrie Electric were funded by both Microsoft and WatServ, allowing Gerrie Electric to evaluate Azure with minimal cost. WatServ demonstrated how they would achieve better cost control, resiliency, enhanced security, and expanded feature/functionality to better align Gerrie Electric's IT environment. Gerrie Electric shifted from capital expense to operating expense and appreciated the scalability.

The resulting assessment included a clear roadmap to Azure, which workloads could benefit Gerrie the most, and an outline of the additional management, automation, reporting and security features that Azure could deliver.

Microsoft Azure Economics Study

Apeiron Sumus has completed a migration study of Gerrie Electric Wholesale Limited's servers to assess suitability, cost and benefit of Microsoft Azure migration.



WatServ is now working with the Gerrie Electric Process Automation team to create new Azure IoT-enabled service revenue streams, which Gerrie Electric can resell to its client base.

“The impact to our business has been really good. We are not seeing a large increase in OPEX. Moving to Azure has given us a stable, highly available environment for the workloads we’ve migrated. This was an eye-opener for us and made us realize that we have this new philosophy for how we approach running our IT. We are looking at every workload saying that if it can move, we are moving it,” said Patchev.

Gerrie Electric moved 20 workloads onto Azure, including their POS system and online catalogue search, the bread and butter of their operations. Both internal Gerrie Electric users and external Gerrie Electric customers were not impacted by the migration.

Microsoft Windows Server Azure Costs



One Year Forecast



No User Disruption, Geo-Redundancy, Improved Visibility

“When we went live there was no impact. The users had no idea what was going on. They just turned things on, and everything worked ... and as an IT team, we have so many more bells and whistles. We can monitor and log and see performance. We have geo-redundancy, automation, security, and more, right out of the box. We simply choose to click it on and have things running and working perfectly in Azure. These are things that we couldn't do or couldn't do easily on-prem. It's really changed the way we set things up, the way we work,” said Patchev. “WatServ helped us rationalize our licensing, and we realized that we had a number of licenses we could use Azure hybrid benefits for. It really changed the discussion from what are the costs to it's probably going to save you money to move these workloads into Azure.”

The Future is Azure

Gerrie Electric's main business is reselling industrial electrical equipment. Due to WatServ's guidance, they are now able to focus on more strategic initiatives, such as building advanced products, including IoT. Gerrie Electric is piloting a new revenue model that offers data insights through Azure and their IoT Process Automation line. WatServ is helping to develop, design, run and deploy this solution. The IoT practice creation has opened new doors for Gerrie Electric to use Azure-based IoT solutions to get new business.



For Gerrie Electric, opportunity shines bright with WatServ

WatServ supported Gerrie Electric through cloud roadmap creation, proof of concept and a painless implementation. They continue to help the Gerrie Electric team find new opportunities and build new revenue models. The digital transformation created business value that Gerrie Electric hadn't foreseen while working within its outdated infrastructure – value that WatServ knew was possible.

“A true digital transformation journey starts with meeting the customer where they are. Some customers are eager to move to the cloud, others are more hesitant. You have to move at the customer's pace and ensure you get the transformation right so that they are happy and comfortable,” says Dave Lacey, CEO, WatServ. “It would be easier if customers could glimpse the future to see how much business value the cloud will bring them. But they can't, so they have to trust us and the proof of concept – we take that trust very seriously.”

With the cloud, organizations can modernize their technology assets, manage risk, accelerate go-to-market strategies and ensure compliance. Wherever you are in your cloud journey, WatServ can help. [Click here](#) to learn more about WatServ's advisory services.





WatServ is an IT solutions provider helping clients digitally transform their businesses through cloud technologies and services.

For more information, visit www.watserv.com