

CASE STUDY

Ensuring the success of a critical platform for business

Developing and implementing a critical solution

Our client's global web platform is critical to its business – it has to be there up and running no matter what. Yet over the years the platform they had in place had begun to show its age. A solution that had been reasonably sophisticated ten years ago was proving to be increasingly inflexible and difficult to use. There was no such thing as a small or quick change. Moreover, successive customisations had further compromised the platform's ability to perform and maintenance and upgrades were becoming ever more problematic. The original principle of having a central platform that gave scale economies and enabled group communications to retain overall control was breaking down.

Our client recognised the need to change. The challenge was to develop and implement a new modern platform – one that was easier to use and far more flexible. We helped them meet this challenge.

Finding a better way forward

An initial project to implement a new web platform solution had failed. We had worked with our client on various critical tasks over the years, so they called us in to help them assess and learn from the failure. They wanted to avoid it happening again and find a better way forward. Through this work we made a series of recommendations which our client took on board.

Taking the project forward to success

A new project to develop the global web platform was undertaken and we were once again called in at a crucial point. One of our partners came in as project director to help move the project on to a successful conclusion.

Truly independent and experienced

Our client wanted to get us involved for a number of reasons. We had the necessary experience of leading and managing complex projects. We were very much at home working across business and IT to deliver coordinated, practical solutions. And we were completely independent and purely focused on serving our client's best interests.

Retaining control

Our client had engaged two suppliers – one focusing on strategy and vision for the platform and the other on the technical build. Each supplier had done a great job in their own area of work but the project had reached a block, as our client explored one of the suppliers becoming the prime contractor and leading the project going forward.

Appointing one supplier to lead might have seemed to be a sensible way to reduce risks for our client but we took a different view. We advised our client to retain control of the project themselves with our help, and to contract with each of the two main suppliers to deliver against their respective areas of activity and expertise.

“Are you embarking on a similar project? Are some of your business critical systems showing their age, but replacing them just feels daunting? Or perhaps you’ve got the opportunity to develop a brand new systems, and need help thinking through the “how”. Or maybe moving to the cloud is on your to-do list, but you don’t know where to start? If any of these scenarios resonate, or you are facing similar issues, please feel free to get in touch. We may be able to help.”

Dave Machin
Partner



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Concentrating expertise

This would ensure that each supplier would concentrate more singularly on doing the work that needed to be done. Also, by retaining direct control our client would limit exposure to risk of failure and indeed be able to drive this critical project forward to a successful conclusion. After all, no matter how you construct a project, if it goes wrong it is the client who ultimately pays.

It was not an easy process, but our partner secured everyone's buy-in to this way forward and we were able to press on with the project.

Pioneering a strong cloud-based solution

One of the big requirements was for the web platform to be able to cope with occasional massive spikes in demand. The solution had to be robust but also as efficient as possible. The cloud was an obvious choice here – far more flexible and cost-efficient than investing in building spare capacity in-house which would stand idle most of the time.

However, our client had never before put any critical operations on the cloud and was understandably wary. To persuade everyone concerned, we built and socialised a very strong case for a flexible, efficient and secure cloud solution, taking into account and mitigating all the risks, whether technical, legal or commercial. The decision was taken to go with the cloud solution and it proved to be very successful.

Deploying agile techniques

Eight key products and services were chosen and linked together to form the new global web platform. The solution was developed using agile project principles, with iterative rapid

building and reviewing. This was another innovative aspect – it was one of the first properly agile projects undertaken by our client.

Robust, flexible, easy to use

On our client's behalf we led the development of the robust, flexible and easy to use global web platform. We also helped our client introduce a new organisation and ways of working in order to make the most of the platform. To this end they formed a combined in-house technical and creative team in the global communications business.

Zero downtime

The new global platform successfully went live and has been a great success. The solution has proved its resilience and flexibility. There has been zero downtime.

New organisation

The new organisation is in place looking after the platform and they are progressively moving all their websites onto it.

Increased productivity

Editor productivity has increased substantially. Making content changes is far easier – what used to take weeks now takes days or even hours.

Further enhancements

Looking ahead, our client plans to enhance further their web platform – building on the strong critical solution we helped them develop and deliver.

