



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

SKILLS FOR CARE

Skills for Care maximises the value of its VMware and Microsoft investments with Phoenix Software

Skills for Care is a UK charity that provides tools and support to adult social care organisations in England. The charity has been a Phoenix Software customer since 2005, with Phoenix supplying the majority of its Microsoft software and completing numerous implementation and consultancy projects through the years.

In 2010 it undertook a Volume Services Agreement (VSA) with Phoenix, which provides the charity with an annual allocation of consultancy hours with Phoenix that it can draw on as and when it needs them. With the entirety of Phoenix Software's experts at its disposal, Skills for Care was soon able to put this expertise to good use.

CHALLENGE

Skills for Care regularly turns to Phoenix Software for advice on how it can take advantage of the latest software and hardware innovations, in addition to any other major developments or changes in the pricing of IT. The charity

AT-A-GLANCE

Challenge

Introduce cost savings by maximising the use of its existing VMware commitments. Improve user engagement in the charity's under-used and outdated intranet.

Solution

Migrate Skills for Care's Disaster Recovery and website hosting over to its existing VMware vSphere and vCloud solutions. Migrate the charity's intranet to Microsoft SharePoint

Benefits

Achievement of 70% cost savings in Disaster Recovery solution with minimal additional investment or commitment. Significant improvements in the quality and user engagement of the charity's intranet.

has the benefit of a highly-skilled, dedicated in-house IT team of eight which can handle most IT projects and day-to-day tasks itself. However, the team draws on its Volume Services Agreement with Phoenix whenever specialist advice or implementation experience is required.

Most recently, Skills for Care contacted Phoenix for help in two specialist areas; maximising the ROI of its various VMware implementations, and updating its outdated and under-used intranet.



“Phoenix is our first port of call whenever we need expert advice or skills for a particularly demanding project. Its recent work on our VMware and SharePoint projects has not only delivered us cost savings of 70% through the better utilisation of our existing investments, but it has also simplified the management of our infrastructure by reducing the number of different solutions we use.”

Kamran Asif
ICT Infrastructure Manager
Skills for Care

SOLUTION

VMware: DR and Website Hosting

Following an internal audit of its infrastructure, Skills for Care was keen to see how it could maximise the value from its significant investment in VMware technologies. The charity currently uses VMware vSphere for data centre virtualisation plus VMware vCloud Air for its public cloud platform. It therefore, picked up the phone to Phoenix Software's VMware specialist, who came to the charity to update them on the latest VMware innovations and to see if, and how, any of these could be applied to Skills for Care.

The consultation with Phoenix soon led to a review of Skills for Care's current disaster recovery (DR) service, which was provided by a local company that replicated the charity's servers to an offsite location. While the service had proven to be reliable, it was also very expensive to run and tied Skills for Care into three-year long contracts. With the DR service approaching the end of its three-year contract, Phoenix informed Skills for Care about VMware's own disaster recovery solution, VMware vCloud Air Disaster Recovery, a recovery-as-a-service solution directly owned and operated by VMware.

VMware's solution could offer the same replicated service that Skills for Care already enjoyed but delivered via VMware's highly-secure and SLA-supported cloud infrastructure. Most crucially of all to Skills for Care, VMware's solution is priced on a pay-as-you-use model so the charity would be freed from its three-year contract commitment. The price was the icing on the cake for Skills for Care; since it was already invested in VMware vCloud the cost to add VMware Disaster Recovery was considerably lower than its existing solution.

At the same time as leveraging VMware for disaster recovery, Phoenix helped Skills for Care make use of VMware vCloud Air to host its public websites, which deliver critical services to its customers. These include The Social Care Commitment, a Department of Health initiative for improving adult social care standards, Care Improvement Works, a collection of e-learning tools for social carers, and Learn from Others, a resource for carers to learn best practice from their peers.

As part of a cost-cutting initiative, Skills for Care was looking for ways to reduce the costs of these website services, which were currently hosted with an external web hosting company. The charity had no desire to host websites on its own servers, so Phoenix helped the charity to migrate its websites to VMware's vCloud Air servers, which were cheaper to run and also delivered the guaranteed 99.99% availability that the charity needed for these critical services.

Microsoft SharePoint: Intranet

At the same time as reviewing their VMware implementations, Skills for Care was conscious that its intranet was clunky, poorly-designed and under-used. Put simply, it was not delivering the quality of service to Skills for Care employees that it needed to.

“Moving over to SharePoint has also reinvigorated staff interest in the company intranet, by improving usability and engagement considerably. While it is still early days for this project, we are pleased with employee response and usage levels so far, and hope to continue to expand our use of SharePoint in the future.”

Kamran Asif
ICT Infrastructure Manager
Skills for Care

As heavy users of Microsoft software (Office, Exchange, Windows Server etc.), Skills for Care felt that Microsoft SharePoint might be a logical solution to this problem. With no direct experience of using SharePoint internally, however, and having concerns about the ease of implementation, Skills for Care contacted Phoenix for advice. It also wanted to ensure that SharePoint was the right solution for them, so it sought Phoenix's independent advice on the various intranet options available.

Having first reviewed the market with Skills for Care and determined that SharePoint would be the most cost-effective solution for its needs, Phoenix Software's SharePoint specialist proposed the best configuration for Skills for Care's intranet. Given the specialist skills required to install SharePoint effectively, Skills for Care commissioned Phoenix to undertake the entire installation and configuration on its behalf.

BENEFITS

VMware: DR and website Hosting

- **Cost savings of 70% since moving Disaster Recovery to VMware vCloud Air** – the previous DR solution was a fully managed service, which was costly and unnecessary
- **Significant flexibility** – since VMware's DR solution works on a rolling monthly contract, Skills for Care is not tied into a fixed service for three years and can scale the service up or down according to its DR requirements
- **Minimal investment or additional configuration needed** – Skills for Care's previous DR service required the charity to maintain dedicated data lines for the backup, which was an additional unnecessary expense. Dedicated lines are not required with VMware's DR solution. It also did not require the configuration of a dedicated WAN to operate, instead making use of the charity's existing network infrastructure
- **Direct control** – because VMware's DR is not delivered as a managed service, Skills for Care has direct control over its backup service via an easy-to-use and familiar interface which required no specialist training to operate

Microsoft SharePoint: Intranet

- **High engagement** – with a new fit-for-purpose, next-generation intranet, Skills for Care's new intranet has proven popular with first adopters. As Skills for Care rolls this out across the organisation, it is fast becoming a go-to resource that delivers value to employees every day
- **Improved document management** – by using SharePoint as the central repository for important documents, all Skills for Care employees now know where to go for the very latest version
- **Familiar and consistent user interface** – the SharePoint user experience is familiar to anyone who has used Microsoft's Office suite, which minimised the training required to get Skills for Care up to speed

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

To find out how we can help you transform any aspect of your IT estate, contact the Phoenix Team now on:

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