Softchoice accelerates Hansen's journey into Azure

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Overview

Industry

Software and services for businesses in the communications, energy and utilities sectors.

Business challenges

Acquisition-related assets in a colocated data center required modernization and migration to Azure.

Technology solutions deployed

Azure Migration Program, to fund a transition of hundreds of servers to Azure and provide extended Microsoft support.

In May of 2019, Hansen Technologies acquired Sigma Systems, a leading provider of software and services to the communications industry. This acquisition prompted Hansen to evaluate and seek to optimize the Sigma data center in Toronto, along with Sigma's multi-year commitment to Microsoft Azure service consumption.

As part of its ongoing cost and technical optimization efforts — and to better integrate Sigma's operations into its own — Hansen elected to migrate more than 400 servers from Sigma's Toronto data center into Azure. Sigma had already worked with Softchoice pre-acquisition, for professional help with the company's Microsoft business.

The partnership continued during the Azure migration and resulted in a rapid transition that maximized Hansen's ROI.

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Acquiring the right technology for long-term support

Headquartered in Australia, Hansen serves over 580 customers in 80 countries worldwide. The organization provides a range of software and services that help telecom, utilities, and energy related companies create, sell, and deliver new products and services, manage and analyze customer data, and control critical revenue management and customer support processes. The May 2019 acquisition of Sigma Systems expanded Hansen's global presence, while creating some new complications in supporting Sigma's IT environments and integrating them into Hansen's global footprint.

Until the Hansen acquisition, Sigma had maintained a data center in Toronto. This site immediately presented some technical and cost optimization challenges for the Hansen team. The Sigma data center, which had long been an important development environment, resided within a colocation facility that Hansen did not own. Moreover, the hardware inside of it was reaching end-of-life and there were numerous costly maintenance contracts to deal with as well.

"The Sigma data center in Toronto housed a lot of legacy hardware that was becoming expensive to license and maintain relative to other more modern approaches," explained Matt Gurrie, Chief Information Officer at Hansen. "After holistically analyzing all of the associated costs, technical debt and supportability, we decided to pursue an Azure migration, a decision that also made sense in light of the existing Sigma–Microsoft relationship."

Hansen sought to decommission some of these legacy assets in Toronto, and modernize the infrastructure it inherited as part of the Sigma acquisition. Branching out into Azure was part of Hansen's broader hybrid solution strategy, under which it utilizes hosted as well as public cloud resources to support its global operations. In this case, migrating servers into Azure would help Hansen control costs, reduce outages and strengthen cybersecurity.

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Accelerated migration: 462 servers into Azure, in just six weeks

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— Matt Gurrie, CIO, Hansen Technologies

Softchoice had partnered with Sigma during the four years leading up to the acquisition, managing its Microsoft commitments. After Hansen took over, Softchoice continued in this capacity and led the planning and execution of the Azure migration. The Softchoice team provided technical knowledge and resources to Hansen's personnel to help them understand how the new environment would be designed and ultimately function.

For this project, Softchoice utilized the Azure Migration Program for funding. The migration resulted in 462 servers moved from the on-prem Sigma data center in Toronto to the Azure cloud, over the course of only six weeks. Hansen also received extended support for Windows Server

2008 and SQL Server 2008 as part of the Azure transition. "Our partnership with Softchoice was very collaborative," Gurrie explained. "The Softchoice team worked with us closely all the way through, to refine and improve every aspect of the migration, including security updates and automation. Softchoice was also very flexible in how it applied technical resources throughout the planning process and continually evolved to meet our needs."

The accelerated migration featured parallel training and workshops to address design challenges, cover other specific topics and generally ensure the Hansen team was always up to speed on the project's progress. The old Toronto environment was ultimately decommissioned on schedule, thanks to the combination of Softchoice's precise execution and Hansen's extensive pre-migration planning.

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By moving on from the legacy infrastructure in the old Sigma data center, Hansen realized several major improvements:

- The company escaped the rising expenses associated with the aging data center's hardware and software. With key infrastructure now in Azure, it can maximize its technology investments.

- There has also been a performance boost in the cloud, as older hardware has been replaced with newer technologies.

- Critical processes such as system patching have been automated with Softchoice's help.

- More broadly, cybersecurity has been further strengthened, and Hansen is now able to translate its security requirements into the Azure environment.

With all of the previous Sigma infrastructure now migrated to the cloud, Hansen is considering further cloud modernization on the application side. Softchoice has been a critical resource for Hansen throughout the migration process, helping the company get the most business value from the Azure cloud.

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About Hansen Technologies

The customer

Hansen Technologies is a global leader in software and services for companies in the communications, energy and utilities industries. In 2019, it acquired Sigma Systems, a global provider of catalog-driven software for communication service providers and energy companies.

The ask

After acquiring Sigma Systems, Hansen Technologies needed to modernize Sigma's infrastructure and elected to move to Azure. To do so, Hansen needed to migrate infrastructure from Sigma's Toronto data center to the Azure cloud.

The Softchoice value

Softchoice guided Hansen through the Azure Migration Program, collaborating closely with the customer to move 462 servers in just 6 weeks.

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