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HOUSING ASSOCIATION'S GUIDE
CLOUD MIGRATION MADE EASY

Having worked with many Housing Associations over his 15 years in the industry, Koris365 and CIT employee Jason Belton shares some of his experiences and insights around Housing Associations and public cloud strategies in this short guide.

From helping HA's to consider and compare all the options available to them, whether that be private, public or hybrid approach to cloud, from initial considerations to addressing unruly public cloud costs, we look at the common questions posed to Jason over the years and bring up to date guidance for HA's looking to ensure their tenants are well served, their employees are productive and efficient and their organisations IT is run smoothly.

01 Is there a proven process for planning and undertaking a migration to the public cloud?

To optimise cloud efficiency, Housing Associations should thoroughly evaluate their existing workloads, using both manual assessments and advanced tools where appropriate, to ensure they are properly sized. This ensures that companies only pay for the resources they truly need, thereby avoiding unnecessary expenses. Additionally, it's crucial to factor in current and future backup and disaster recovery technologies to guarantee compatibility. By doing so, businesses can confidently meet their recovery point and time objectives, safeguarding their operations against potential disruptions. This proactive approach not only enhances cost-efficiency but also strengthens overall resilience.

In traditional setups where Housing Associations own their compute and storage infrastructure and invest in Microsoft Data Center licenses and VMware vSphere, it's common to spin up new machines whenever a new business need arises – often without incurring immediate costs. However, this can quickly lead to an overabundance of machines, cluttering the infrastructure with more virtual machines than necessary. As organisations transition to the cloud, it's essential to conduct a thorough analysis of potential cohabitation opportunities. By consolidating workloads and reducing the number of instances, companies can significantly cut down on cloud costs, making their infrastructure more efficient and cost-effective.

02 What kind of resource is needed to manage a public cloud environment?

While technical expertise is essential, partnering with a cloud migration specialist can transform the process from a daunting challenge into a streamlined success. A skilled partner not only brings in-depth knowledge but also offers valuable experience in right-sizing services to perfectly align with your organisation's needs. This careful calibration is crucial for keeping costs under control while ensuring optimal performance. Factors like uptime, system performance, and recovery time can significantly influence expenses, but a knowledgeable partner can present tailored solutions at various price points, empowering your business to make informed decisions that balance cost with performance.

03 When Housing Associations migrate to the cloud can it cause any unintended issues?

Complications often arise for Housing Associations around the unique applications they use which are often not available in truly SaaS varieties. This can often make achieving objectives like; ensuring existing apps perform as well or better, while also keeping costs in check very difficult. I have found engaging closely with the application vendor key to addressing this, creating a proof of concept can be a vital step as it will give the business confidence prior to committing to a term in cloud.

04 Is management of environments easier with public cloud?

Moving to pure public cloud can introduce new challenges, skills earned through managing an on-premises solution may not directly transfer to managing AWS, Azure or GCP. Other solutions are available that can minimise risk with migrating workloads and effectively allows the internal team to utilise existing skills. However, if a pure cloud solution is the chosen route, up-skilling will likely be required, thus leveraging the skills of your managed service provider will be essential.

05 What can you do about spiralling public cloud costs relating to virtual servers?

Many Housing Associations either still use on-premises or co-located infrastructure where the kit is owned by the organisation. In these environments, providing there is sufficient resource available, any new services can be built without the need for additional capital purchase. When migrating to cloud however, this OPEX model can have surprises as costs are no longer as predictable and can change depending on usage, specifically from a storage or traffic perspective. Working with a partner specialising in cloud can assist with keeping costs in check so there are no surprises when the monthly bill rolls in.

To further reduce cost and prevent reliance on any one cloud, Housing Associations can distribute workloads across multiple cloud providers or combine public and private clouds to take advantage of cost efficiencies and avoid vendor lock-in. This can provide more competitive pricing and greater flexibility especially where private cloud is used. This can often be most suitable to businesses who require near 100% uptime, ensuring key services can continue in the event of a failure of any single cloud.

06

Where organisations are finding costs for public cloud services are increasing beyond the budgets allocated what should they do?

I'd begin with a thorough deep dive into your cloud expenses, scrutinising recent bills to uncover hidden costs and opportunities for savings. Cloud billing is notoriously complex, and partnering with an expert can help you navigate this maze, bringing clarity and pinpointing where you can cut unnecessary expenses. This could involve identifying services that are no longer needed, ensuring your resources are deployed in the most cost-effective way, or exploring alternative solutions that better suit your needs.

One common pitfall is the unexpected costs associated with data egress – traffic leaving the cloud – often catching businesses off guard. By analysing these and other potential culprits, you can take proactive steps to optimise your cloud spending and avoid unpleasant surprises down the line.

07

What are the biggest Technology challenges Housing Associations face and why?

Due to the inherent nature of a Housing Associations day to day operations, there is a huge reliance on a reliable Housing Management System (HMS) to effectively serve customers, record financial information, store reported repairs and so forth. Once a HA has chosen a vendor, it becomes very difficult to migrate to another with re-training of staff, migration of data and implementation time all adding up to a costly exercise.

While modern applications are delivered using a Software as a Service (SaaS) model where the application and its data is hosted by the vendor, making this the vendors responsibility to secure, backup & ensure it provides adequate performance to end-users, many vendors within the Housing sector are on a path to deliver this, however, there are difficulties with migrating to these all encompassing services. In the meantime, Housing Associations need to deliver these apps using legacy app enablement solutions that do not offer the seamless experience required by staff and provide an administration overhead for ICT.

Transitioning to a more modern ICT environment can be achieved by adopting a primarily thick client solution, where locally installed applications seamlessly integrate with cloud services like Office 365. This setup leverages the power of cloud while maintaining the familiarity and reliability of on-premises applications. For secure and efficient access, a combined application VPN can be employed, ensuring smooth connectivity to essential resources.

For legacy applications that haven't yet been modernised, incorporating legacy app enablement solution provides a bridge, allowing these older apps to function in the new setup until they can be fully updated. This approach not only enhances the overall performance and security of your ICT services but also positions your organisation at the forefront of technological advancement, blending the best of traditional and cloud-based infrastructures.

08

How do HA's make sure applications are available to all their users no matter where they are especially where important applications are not available in a SaaS format?

The first step is a comprehensive fact-finding mission. You'll need to dive deep into the specific applications that the HA's staff rely on daily, crafting detailed personas and profiles to determine if certain individuals or entire departments can effectively operate with a thick client setup. For those who need seamless access to internal resources from any location, we would thoroughly assess the current solutions in place, tweaking them as needed or proposing new, cutting-edge options to ensure an optimal end-user experience. This approach not only enhances productivity but also tailors the technology to fit the unique needs of each user, ensuring everyone has the tools they need to succeed, no matter where they work.

09 Summary

Jason's Guide to HA's covers everything from initial considerations for cloud migration to managing unpredictable public cloud costs and all the concerns and considerations in between. With emphasis placed on the importance of right-sizing resources, assessing backup and disaster recovery technologies, and consolidating workloads to achieve cost efficiency and resilience, Jason advocates for a thorough evaluation of existing solutions, exploring cohabitation opportunities, and partnering with cloud migration specialists to navigate complex billing and technical requirements. By adopting a tailored approach that blends traditional and cloud-based infrastructures, Housing Associations can ensure their IT services remain robust, cost-effective, and capable of meeting the unique needs of their users.

Contact Us Today for More Information

At **Koris365**, we have a wealth of expertise in cloud infrastructure strategies and design. Contact us today to discuss your requirements.

SPEAK TO OUR TEAM

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