



How to build a company from the ground up

INTRODUCTION:

TIAA-CREF, a leading financial services provider, and Henderson Global Investors, one of Europe's largest investment managers, launched a new global real estate investment management company, TIAA Henderson Real Estate in April 2014. The new company offers clients expanded investment opportunities in the global real estate market while helping to accelerate the growth of each firm's real estate business.

Azation was engaged to provide consultancy for the delivery of the IT Infrastructure to support this new Joint Venture.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Provide a full business suite and technology platform (including full HQ video conferencing facilities) for 300 users appointed from 2 parent companies in 12 countries. This is to be delivered in a very short time and be as good, if not better than the existing parents' systems.

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE UNFOLDS:

The establishment of a global entity from a standing start and with very tight deadlines presents a number of challenges particularly with traditionally long lead times for networks and equipment. Having set the date 7 months out and announced to the market, a fixed delivery date set.

Let the clock start ticking.

THE PROJECT:

Azation was appointed early to assist with the design of the solution and to work through the vendor selection process.

The design was settled, based on a number of key principles. The infrastructure had to allow for:-

- A very mobile and geographically diverse workforce
- An capability for growth anywhere in the world
- Rapid deployment for additional offices as the business opportunities evolve
- Green credentials – this was an important facet of the solution.

Providing this kind of infrastructure required a vendor that understood the timelines and was willing to partner in not only the delivery but also in the vision that had been developed by Azation in conjunction with the client.

A cloud based Citrix solution was the only logical choice if these timescales and geographic challenges were to be met and the vendor selection hinged on their ability to engage under these terms and to have the capability to provide an end to end solution.

By using proven methods, Azation provided key guidance for the vendor selection and the ongoing partnership that would deliver the environment on time.

The telephony presented similar challenges and with a very mobile workforce had to be flexible. Azation research and background found that it had to be Global Voice over IP. The decision of vendor in the end became quite simple – a global telecoms provider with Data Centres in the UK and Asia Pacific that was agile and competent.

Once the vendor had been chosen, the initial steps involved getting the WAN lead times slashed to something would allow us to deliver. Azation adopted the *“agile infrastructure”* approach and worked with Telstra to develop a delivery plan that allowed for orders to be placed for WAN links, based on what was known at the time (still 6 months out) with a view to refining as the model developed. This addressed the historically long lead times required for network connectivity.

The server infrastructure was then approached in a similar manner – based on virtual servers and using Telstra’s dedicated suite model, servers were to be provisioned against a design that was still forming. The unified communications (video/voice/instant messaging) was also designed based on the need to ensure we had sufficient capacity in each of the offices and the flexibility to ramp up as the business changed their staffing levels.

Azation then attended to the end user devices and a commodity approach chosen to allow the infrastructure to be manufacturer agnostic and drive standardization through the new company.

To provide the ultimate flexibility for our client’s users, a *Bring Your Own Device* (BYOD) approach was adopted to supplement the company provided devices. The challenges in this area are well known, and by leveraging Azation’s background in IT Security, a solution was developed to provide a level of security that the Client was comfortable with and followed industry standards. Following on from this start Azation also provided the policies and the processes for the retained IT presence to follow and implement.

The applications project team have been beavering away finding if the applications that the users have been accustomed to, will still run in the new world of the cloud. At last count this was 258 individual applications that had to be packaged, tested and delivered to the users.

“The Cloud” is also the buzzword for a number of the main applications that the new joint venture will rely on. With the timescales such as they are, every opportunity to fast track the delivery of the applications must be taken. Telstra/GF has been participating with us in undertakings to

provide applications from various vendors' clouds through our Citrix solution to the end user's desktop.

After launch there is significantly less number of traditional IT staff on hand. The job of providing the users with technology support will be managed by Green Field Technology and on the server side by Telstra.

On top of all this frenetic activity an overarching principle of "Sustainability" had to be met, as being a property business our focus must be on reducing our carbon footprint.

Upon Azation analysis, we found ways to reduce our power consumption down to the point where with the current model requires 39 watts per desk down from a whopping 350 watts that the users consume today.

Business Benefits:

By being able to leverage Azation methods and experience – this joint venture managed to go from a standing start with nothing to a fully operational global company without any impact to the existing parent companies and without even missing a step at go-live

All this contributes to the success of the new business in keeping costs to a minimum and providing a service to the end user that should allow them to focus on their core competencies - Real Estate Investment Management.

- Running costs per desk down
- Commodity hardware allows for better pricing
- Energy efficient Data Centres
- Rapid deployment
- Total mobility for the users
- Ability to connect to company data from almost anywhere with almost any device