

Seamless Cloud-Based Data Move Drives Cost Savings Under Tight Timeline

Hospitality Company Moves to SAP on Azure to Manage Internal Data

In an [earlier blog](#), we shared a system architect's view of a recent re-platforming project. In this post, Protiviti Managing Director Don Loden reviews the business decisions that drove this important client project.

Making the decision to move a data platform from an external vendor to an in-house solution and do it in a cost-effective way is a significant one, particularly when there's a deadline looming. Recently, Protiviti worked with a California-based hospitality company to do just that – moving the client's data management platform from a third-party data warehouse to an internal platform. The challenge of migrating and re-platforming this entire enterprise data warehouse was compounded by a very tight deadline which, if missed, would have resulted in the client paying more than seven figures in cost and contract penalties.

When we were first introduced to this client by SAP, we immediately learned that all of their analytics and most of their back-office systems were being handled by that third-party hosting company. That included hosting and managing the client's entire IT environment and ultimately, its data warehouse and reporting environments. The client had a very detailed plan of what they hoped to accomplish with a re-platforming project, which allowed us to quickly identify a solution that included SAP tools and Microsoft's Azure. Given the extremely short deadline, there was no time to waste procuring, installing and bringing on-premise hardware up to speed. A cloud-based solution was the right answer for this challenge.

SAP on Azure on a Deadline

The existing hosted environment was a Teradata base solution for the database and data platform, fed or loaded with data from Informatica, and fronted with reporting by IBM Cognos. We recommended a switch to SAP HANA for the data platform and the business intelligence (BI) metadata layer, along with SAP Data Services, which is SAP's ETL tool. Ultimately, the client's data will be consumed in the data warehouse with SAP Analytics

Cloud (SAC) and SAP BusinessObjects (BOBJ). All of these tools, with the exception of SAC (which is hosted as software as a service (SaaS) offering), are running on the Azure platform.

Our project scope included:

- Data migration of the existing legacy environment (Teradata) to SAP HANA
- Migrating the platform to Microsoft's Azure cloud environment
- Implementing SAP Analytics Cloud (SAC) to support existing analytics functionality and for future expansion in analytics and management reporting
- Utilizing an alternative delivery model of both on-shore and off-shore delivery teams.

The end goal was to move the client off the previous platform as quickly as possible, and the faster we could do that, the more business benefit we could pack into the solution, enabling the client to avoid the looming penalties. The agility of the SAP toolset and that we were able to achieve with Azure decreased a considerable amount of time normally dedicated to provisioning and start up.

Establishing a Partnership Based on Trust

At the initial demonstration, we were able to show the client why a cloud-based solution was the best option. Time and the impending penalties were clearly the drivers. We knew that it would have taken several months – time we didn't have – to order hardware and 'rack and stack' the servers. Instead, our plan of action allowed us to get machines spun up within a couple of weeks, and we were approximately six weeks into the solution development and showing the client early prototypes before we would have been able to start the project had we stayed on-prem. Waiting to build a platform was a non-starter in this case.

This huge lead time was a dramatic advantage to the client. We were able to get into the solution quickly which, essentially, paid for the project in about a month's time.

To begin, Protiviti implemented a development strategy for separation from the data warehouse partnership. From there, the client's Teradata environment was migrated to SAP HANA on Azure. And by integrating SAP Analytics Cloud into the enterprise data warehouse solution, the client was also able to receive real-time analytics reports supporting daily business operations.

Real-Time Benefits Through Azure

While the switch to Azure prevented millions of dollars in penalties and hardware expenses, the SAP on Azure technology developed and implemented by Protiviti also provided other real-time benefits.

The client is now able to:

- Make data-driven decisions and forecasting using the SAP Analytics Cloud dashboard and reports
- Make real-time operational decisions
- Regularly mail customer-loyalty programs and offers, which drive a significant portion of revenue
- Manage all data internally rather than relying on third-party sources and hardware.

Using its previous enterprise data warehouse system, the client could not see or analyze data in real time. Instead, it took hours to generate the desired information due to the tabular reports the old system utilized. Now, with the real-time reporting SAP on Azure provides, the client can understand customer data and customer spend in a matter of seconds, rather than hours, allowing enhancement of the guest experience.

Additionally, the business no longer needs to rely on the equipment, services and contracts of a third-party data solution. By managing its data internally and in the cloud, the client now has full control over data usage and spend. The flexibility of a cloud environment also allows management to reduce or expand SAP capabilities as necessary without costs associated with external hardware and downtime.

A 'Cloud First' Environment for All

As organizations across the globe recognize the importance of, and benefits associated with, secure cloud environments, Protiviti has seen a corresponding increase in the need for cloud-based solutions. We are seeing organizations move to a 'cloud first' strategy, rather than considering on-premise or data center-based projects. While many organizations were once concerned with the security of such data environments, they have recently seen the financial benefits a cloud-based data environment can offer. Because the SAP on Azure solution created for this hospitality client is repeatable throughout the casino's departments, it also translates well to other clients' needs. The SAP on Azure solution is easily transferable to other organizations utilizing Microsoft products for a myriad of uses around data and reporting.

The solution Protiviti developed for this client is one we believe quickly adapts to the needs of many organizations looking to transition to a cloud-based data environment. In light of the 'new normal' ways of doing business as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, we expect to see more companies turning to cloud-based solutions in order to keep their business as nimble as possible to respond to whatever the future throws at them.

Contact us or visit [Protiviti's SAP consulting services](#) to learn more about our solutions.

About the Author



Don Loden

Managing Director

Technology Consulting – Enterprise Application Solutions