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Banking case study

COVENTRY Building Society

Coventry Building Society achieves operational resiliency with AWS migration

Cognizant guides one of the UK's largest building societies through a cloud transformation, de-risking a legacy IT environment and readying the Society for growth.

At a glance

Industry
Banking

Location
United Kingdom

Challenge
Improve the resiliency of a legacy IT estate and prepare the Society for growth by conducting a cloud migration.

Success Highlights

- 75% increase in IT resiliency following a best-practice migration to AWS
- 40 minutes to provision a new environment on AWS, down from 6–8 weeks on-premises
- IT professionals upskilled to work effectively in a cloud-first environment

The challenge

Coventry Building Society is one of the UK's largest building societies and a top ten UK lender, providing a range of mortgages and savings products to more than two million members.

Based in Coventry and with a deep commitment to sustainable finance, Coventry Building Society was the first building society in the UK to achieve B Corp status and is ranked among the best UK workplaces for women in Great Place to Work® UK's 'super large company' category.

A legacy on-premises IT estate stood in the way of growth

The Society has ambitious objectives to expand its business and diversify its product range, cementing its position as one of the UK's leading building society's. However, its legacy on-premises IT infrastructure was standing in the way of those goals. In particular, a vast Microsoft Windows 2012 estate, comprising more than 900 servers, was facing end of support. This not only hampered growth but also posed resiliency and continuity risks to the business.

Coventry Building Society knew it had to transform and modernise its IT infrastructure and improve resiliency. A change in IT leadership brought a new Cloud First strategy: seeking to migrate and modernise its IT infrastructure to the cloud. This required the help of a trusted, collaborative partner with deep cloud transformation experience and financial services industry expertise. After evaluating several potential partners, the Society chose Cognizant.

Our approach

We approached the project with Coventry Building Society's challenges, strategic goals and sustainability commitments fully in mind. Rather than leveraging our partnerships with individual cloud providers, we conducted an independent assessment to evaluate which platform would be the right choice for the Society.

Having identified and recommended Amazon Web Services (AWS) as the most suitable platform, we carried out a detailed discovery process to understand and map the legacy IT environment before making a phased plan to de-risk as much of the Windows 2012 estate as possible and migrate to AWS. To de-risk such a large migration we started with two lighthouse projects to gain insights, and to serve as a broad template for the remainder of the transformation programme.

A customer-first and people-centric migration

Highlights of our approach to the transformation project included:

Cloud platform selection:
Our independent assessment considered not only the Society's current and future technology requirements but also its existing investments and its environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments. Coventry Building Society is committed to investing in Coventry, and our analysis of local talent pools showed that there were more AWS skills available than for other cloud platforms, enabling the Society to hire locally.

Discovery and analysis:
We used smart tooling, including AWS Application Migration Service (MGN) and Cloudamize, to analyze the Society's existing workloads to understand which could be lifted and shifted into AWS and which might need to be modernised. This analysis revealed that many workloads would require an infrastructure upgrade, and that many applications also needed to be upgraded. We worked with Enterprise Architects across Coventry Building Society to classify every workload and define an appropriate migration or modernisation path.

Landing zone rebuild:
We reviewed Coventry Building Society's existing AWS landing zone and rebuilt it in line with scalability and security best practices for enterprise AWS landing zone architecture.

"Fail fast" lighthouse project:
To de-risk the migration, we ran a lighthouse project with two pilot workloads. The aim was to find any pain points early, so we could better tackle them once the full migration was underway. For that reason, we selected two low-risk but tricky workloads

that each required an application upgrade—and as it turned out, only one proved capable of migration. However, this "fail fast" approach meant we could focus on those workloads that could migrate and upgrade the on-premises data center—which still had a number of years left on its contract—to handle those that had to stay.

Automated migration factory:
With the lighthouse projects completed, we embarked on a phased migration of the Windows 2012 workloads that could be migrated to AWS. We created a migration factory team with onsite and offsite capacity. A front door team of architects and engineers were responsible for analyzing and validating each application and designing the AWS environment for it before handing the application to the factory team to execute the migration using automated tooling.

Change management and upskilling:
From the outset, we approached this as a people project as much as a technology one. The cloud migration meant new ways of working for the Society's IT workforce, who were familiar with on-premises systems. We brought Society engineers into our team to learn new cloud skills, including DevOps, product engineering and incident management. We also conducted regular show-and-tell sessions—including one specific session at CBS Live for around 600+ people, as well as a specific project communication session with 250+ engineers from the Society to gather feedback and ensure everyone was brought along on the cloud transformation journey.

Cloud center of enablement (CCoE):
To ensure continued operational resiliency, we implemented a cloud operating model with a Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed (RACI) matrix and IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) processes. We also designed and supported the formation of a CCoE and upskilled the Society team assigned to it.

Business outcomes

Thanks to its migration to AWS, Coventry Building Society has resolved the resiliency issues that had made its on-premises IT landscape a risk to the business. It has also gained a new, flexible and scalable IT environment that will support its growth plans—and benefits from an upskilled IT workforce and best-practice cloud operating model to ensure agility and resiliency going forward.

Specific outcomes to date include:

- **75% resiliency improvement:** 85% of the Society's complex and critical 2012 workloads have been de-risked with multiple servers and applications also migrated to AWS, eliminating the compliance and security risks posed by legacy operating systems.
- **40-minute provisioning time:** Using end-to-end automation, the Society can now stand up a new cloud environment in minutes—a huge improvement over the six to eight weeks it would typically take for an on-premises server to be provisioned at Coventry Building Society.

- **IT professionals upskilled:** A portion of Coventry Building Society IT teams have been upskilled in the new cloud operating model, including 30 new processes and 15 new documented policy approaches and templates.
- **100+ servers decommissioned:** Our IT landscape assessment identified over 100 on-premises servers that were no longer needed and could be decommissioned, delivering significant ongoing savings in terms of hardware, maintenance and utilities costs.

Primed for growth with a resilient, scalable cloud infrastructure

Before the migration, Coventry Building Society had a sprawling, legacy on-premises IT estate that posed a risk to the business in terms of resiliency. After partnering with Cognizant, it now benefits from a scalable, resilient and enterprise-ready AWS landing zone that has enabled a significant proportion of applications and workloads to be migrated to the cloud. Its legacy server estate has been upgraded and de-risked, and the Society can now progress confidently with its expansion and diversification plans with the knowledge that its IT infrastructure can support its ambitions for decades to come.

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About Coventry Building Society

Coventry Building Society is one of the UK's largest building societies and a top ten UK savings and mortgage provider. It is committed to making financial services simple and open for its members. Its website allows savers to compare the Society's savings accounts with similar products across the whole market. For more information, visit coventrybuildingsociety.co.uk.

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