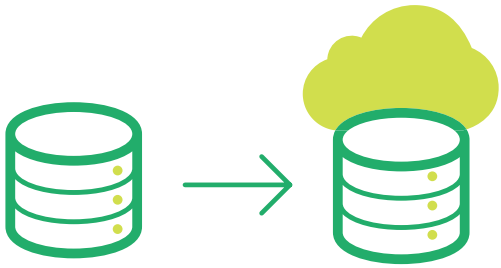
Thorogood case study

Thorogood's move to the cloud with AWS

Given the pace of evolution in cloud technologies, firms are finding it increasingly attractive to migrate their on-premises solutions to the cloud. Prior to the cloud and as-a-service offerings, keeping up with the latest technologies required considerable capital investment and maintenance efforts.



It also meant slower adoption of new technologies, features, and software versions. At Thorogood, this precise conundrum was a significant driver behind the recent decision to move our internal business management tool from an on-premises server to a new home in the Amazon cloud. Our experience before, during and after the migration matches that of all of our clients who have made similar transitions: with an appropriate amount of planning and expertise and the right cloud provider, companies can seamlessly move away from the world of on-premises solutions and reap the significant benefits the cloud offers.

A better future for MIPS

As is the case with most of our clients, a high-performance business management tool plays a critical function in the conduct of business at Thorogood. Known familiarly to our consultants as MIPS, the Management Information and Planning System is a tool that serves a number of vital functions in the Thorogood planning process and plays an integral role in the tracking, reporting and planning of consulting time and project revenue. Consultants use the tool to plan and track the hours that they log on client projects, as well as any expenses that they incur. They use it to

coordinate their availability by tracking the bookings they have on their schedule for obligations that range from external client projects to internal meetings, sales and marketing activity, and holidays. Our executive team utilizes its robust reporting function to monitor a range of revenue and performance benchmarks, including a weekly measure of income expectations that features prominently in planning meetings.

Given the vital role that it plays, the maintenance and upkeep of MIPS and its underlying architecture is inextricably linked to Thorogood's ability to monitor its own performance. The MIPS solution resided in an on-premise end to end Microsoft architecture, utilizing tools like SQL Server, Analysis Services, and Reporting Services. As the warranty on the original Bangalore-based server neared its expiration and the benefits of the cloud became more alluring, Thorogood began to consider the value of migrating. While the existing setup had largely served our needs well, MIPS was not without its headaches. The reliance of a single geographic internal data centre limited redundancy and functional availability. High usage volume could slow performance. For the most part, downtime was limited, but even the occasional outage could create significant disruption if it occurred during a key moment in the weekly or monthly planning, reporting or invoicing process.

While any move away from an on-premises setup necessitates the sacrifice of some degree of autonomy, that also means a reduction in the demands and stress placed upon a company's internal infrastructure management team. In Amazon Web Services, Thorogood knew it would have a proven and trustworthy provider, whose server performance could only be matched on premise with significant capital expenditure, not to mention recurring maintenance and support costs. AWS' ability to integrate with our other technology providers and Office 365, offered cost options catering to usage and commitment needs that were better suited to our situation. The time was right to move to the cloud.

The Three Pillars of Information Security

Key to the success of any migration is a planning process built on the three pillars of information security: confidentiality, integrity, and availability. In Thorogood's case, preserving availability meant utilizing transit gateways to connect our on-premises networks to the AWS network, with the potential to connect to different networks across multiple AWS accounts. The result was a seamless, stress-free migration that had MIPS up and running in its new home in a relatively short period of time.

An Adaptable System With DevOps

Not only did the launch of MIPS on AWS give Thorogood a tool that was more conducive to our needs as a company, it put the company in a position where we could adapt the tool to meet our evolving needs. One of the big draws of the AWS cloud was the way in which it expands its capacity as resources are consumed. But just as significant is the ability for MIPS to adapt with a changing software and business environment. Currently, we are in the process of upgrading the application to MIPS 2.0, a process that has Thorogood developers utilizing DevOps tools and approaches to continuously build, test and release a new version of the application that is being deployed without taking the old version offline. Part of the new improvements is also the switch from Infrastructure-as-a-Service to Platform-as-a-Service to reap the full benefits of moving to the cloud and speed up the development and deployment of new applications that better integrate with AWS PaaS services.

A more traditional setup would have greatly limited the ability to complete such work without causing significant disruption to the flow of business. But MIPS' new architecture on the AWS cloud is enabling Thorogood developers to enjoy the efficiency of DevOps processes and deploy new code to the environment with a push of a button. By using Continuous Integration and Continuous Development pipelines, developers can create a framework where code can be continuously altered and then deployed without ever restricting user access to a functional app.

The ongoing development work is one example of the ways in which the new MIPS architecture has reduced the strain on Thorogood's infrastructure team by harnessing the power of the cloud and the flexibility of DevOps. While the need to monitor the software itself still remains, we no longer have the overhead of managing the underlying hardware that is needed for the software to run and are able to keep on building while deploying.

In short, the migration from on-premises to the AWS cloud has resulted in a faster, less stressful, more robust and at the same time flexible solution that is better situated to handle Thorogood's user needs.

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