

Oracle Cloud helps Wits boost application performance and cut costs



Client profile

The University of the Witwatersrand, affectionately known as “Wits”, is a public university that is internationally distinguished for its research, high academic standards and its commitment to social justice and the advancement of the public good. Wits is home to about 1,500 academics, 6,000 employees, 2,500 joint staff and 41,000 students.

Wits has 100 years of proud academic history and features in the top 1.5% of universities globally.

When the on-premises infrastructure at Wits reached end of support, the university needed a new solution to house their Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) and employee data.

Wits decided to move to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure, and via a tender, partnered with NTT DATA to implement a stable, cost-effective environment that's 40% smaller than their on-premises infrastructure, yet offers significantly better performance.

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We are pleased that NTT DATA took the time to not only understand our IT needs, but also to determine how the university functions and how we do things. Their expertise and guidance have been instrumental in our journey to modernize our infrastructure and keep our ERP solution running smoothly.”

Luci Carosin

GM Application Delivery and Support Services,
University of the Witwatersrand

Business need

Reviewing cloud options for leaving the premises

As a large, open public academic institution, Wits has to balance getting the most out of their existing infrastructure with modernizing their environment. Their long-term infrastructure strategy is to move their applications to the cloud in stages, so that their infrastructure can support their architecture.

In preparing for their cloud migration, they had already worked with us to update their EBS to the latest version to ensure that they could pay their employees on time and manage their benefits.

When their dated on-premises infrastructure reached end of support and could no longer be maintained, they chose to migrate some of their applications to the cloud.

Wits needed a stable, cost-effective cloud environment that could support their approximately 41,000 students and 10,000 employees. They therefore issued a request for proposals (RFP) to companies that had the capability and reliability to perform the migration successfully. An understanding of the university's culture was a prerequisite.

Solution

Creating a new methodology for infrastructure

Initially, Wits considered replacing their on-premises infrastructure with another on-premises solution until they were ready to start achieving their long-term goal of moving to the cloud. While this was an option for the university, it would only have bought them another year of use until their applications expired.

To devise the best solution, we had to bridge the gap between two different ways of approaching projects. In a technology environment, the focus is on the outcomes, and final decisions are documented. In an academic environment, the process of reaching a decision is just as important and as well-documented as the outcome itself. It also involves peer review, with various stakeholders signing off before the decision is implemented.

Through consultation and well-documented discussions, it was decided to move the EBS to Oracle Cloud, as Oracle Fusion Cloud in South Africa did not support payroll. Wits would only pay for what they used, when they used it, which would give them more flexibility and be more cost-effective than buying infrastructure that would only be used for a short time.

The migration was not a lift and shift but involved changing the architecture and replacing hard-coded operations that had been added over time with best-practices cloud architecture. We reinstalled EBS in Oracle Cloud before migrating the functionalities and data to the new environment.

After the migration, we closed all open calls within five days.

Outcomes

Finding a future-proof solution with room for growth

With the migration to Oracle Cloud, Wits now has a stable solution that gives them the time to select the right software-as-a-service model and then migrate their final architecture to the optimal cloud environment.

Improving performance

The payroll and people management system has seen a significant boost in performance since the migration. Although the cloud environment is only about 60% the size of their previous on-premises infrastructure, its performance is much greater: reports that used to run overnight can now be completed in a few hours.

Adapting to academic standards

As a university, Wits follows rigorous, formal processes to ensure that they meet high academic standards. They take the same approach when implementing new technology. Constant communication helped us understand the needs of the university and how to better integrate with their internal processes.

Cost-effective solution

Using Oracle Cloud in conjunction with the university's PeopleSoft and EBS software simplified their licensing environment, helping them to reduce costs.

Supplementing educational excellence with industry expertise

We worked together to find the best choices for the move to the cloud. This involved looking beyond the RFP to determine the university's needs and to give them the right information so that they could make educated decisions for their move to the cloud.

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