



ORGANIZATION

Meredith Corporation



INDUSTRY

Print Media

USE CASES

Mainframe Modernization, Re-platforming, Migration to Amazon Web Services

RESULT

Reduced annual system operating costs by over 90%,

Overview

A major US-based media company delivers print magazines to over 21 million subscribers every week. The company operates two critical systems that support fulfillment to retailers and newsstands, as well as managing sophisticated postage, labeling, and bundling operations to ensure regular on-time delivery of the company's magazines to subscribers.

The company's two major systems were running in separate environments. Before the mainframe modernization project, the larger system was operating on a legacy IBM zCloud mainframe, with 425 applications consisting of over 400,000 lines of code and over 1800 JCL batch jobs. The second system, running in a separate Linux environment, was built using a very different set of technologies, making it difficult to integrate the two systems effectively. The data replication process was slow, with multiple points of potential failure.

The company sought help from Astadia because of its proven track record with mainframe modernization projects, and its deep roster of subject-matter experts. They chose to move both systems to Amazon Web Services (AWS) and to standardize on a common database to eliminate their data replication requirements altogether.



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Challenge

IT leaders in the company sought to solve some daunting long-term problems:

- Operating costs had increased to over \$1 million per year, making the IBM mainframe system prohibitively expensive.
- Load-balancing of mainframe operations placed severe time constraints on mission-critical jobs, which could require up to 15 hours each to execute.
- Two shifts were needed to support overnight jobs, requiring a total of four full-time personnel to operate the mainframe system.
- Replication between the two systems was problematic, requiring frequent intervention.

IT leaders in the company expressed concerns about potential performance problems following a modernization project. Those concerns later proved to be unwarranted, as performance on the new system was more than twice that of the legacy mainframe.

Despite those concerns, company leaders made the decision to move forward with their mainframe modernization project, largely due to soaring mainframe operating costs.

Solution

Astadia recommended a re-platforming approach in which both systems would be moved to AWS. In addition, the systems were standardized around a common technology stack, most notably including a shared Aurora PostGres relational database instance. PostGres replaced the separate IBM DB2 and Sybase databases, eliminating the company's recurring challenges with database replication between the two systems.

The Linux-based system, formerly running on-premise, was moved to a dedicated AWS cloud instance. The mainframe system was also re-platformed to AWS, with Micro Focus COBOL enabling the company to continue running its existing legacy code in the new environment.



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The project team held to an aggressive timeline, due in large part to the pending end-date on the company's mainframe contract. To avoid another full-year contract which could cost the company over \$1 million, they set an ambitious goal to have the new system up and running in just over nine months. Working together, Astadia and their client completed the job on time and within budget.

Results

Initially, the company undertook this project as a matter of necessity. Skyrocketing operating costs were becoming prohibitively expensive. As the project unfolded, however, they soon realized they had much more to gain from their modernization effort.

- The cloud-based system, now running on AWS, is vastly simplified. That translates to lower maintenance costs and greater agility going forward.
- By transitioning to a shared PostGres database instance, the company has eliminated the recurring problems they experienced with replication between their two legacy systems.
- The problem of load-balancing on the mainframe has been eliminated. If additional capacity is required, the AWS cloud can easily be scaled up to suit the companies needs.
- Performance has more than doubled. Jobs that used to take up to 15 hours are now completed in less than half of that time.
- By eliminating load-balancing and cutting processing time in half, the company was able to reduce their second shift, generating significant additional savings.
- The company's system operating costs, which had exceeded \$1 million per year, dropped to less than \$100,000 annually.

This media giant initially launched this project to reduce the cost of operating their critical IT systems. After completing the project successfully, however, they have realized substantial additional benefits.

In partnership with Astadia, AWS, and Micro Focus, the company has built a simpler environment that is easier to maintain and can evolve as the company's needs change.



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