



Reduced, and predictable, costs of providing IT services



IT support and upgrades greatly simplified



Resources for growth and for development projects easily available



Data backup and recovery greatly simplified

## Leading law firm Johnson Winter & Slattery leverages VMware Cloud on AWS for IT efficiency

JOHNSON  
WINTER &  
SLATTERY

Leading independent Australian law firm Johnson Winter & Slattery (JWS) has grown since its foundation in 1993 by Tony Johnson, Nigel Winter and Peter Slattery to more than 60 partners and 200 lawyers across offices in Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. It provides legal services to major Australian and international corporations on their business activities, disputes and most challenging transactions.

JWS ran IT from its own data centres and had identified that moving its IT resources to the cloud would reduce costs and increase efficiency and agility, but initially was unable to find a cloud environment that would enable it to meet the strict client data confidentiality requirements of the legal profession. JWS then determined it would be able to satisfy its security requirements with VMware Cloud on AWS and other AWS services and has now migrated all operations to AWS.

### INDUSTRY

Legal

### LOCATION

Adelaide, Australia

### KEY CHALLENGES

- Complex security requirements for client data
- Labour-intensive support requirements of in-house data centres
- Ensuring business continuity during a cloud migration
- Legacy applications not supported in a cloud environment

### SOLUTION

VMware Cloud on AWS with other AWS services including Amazon S3 for backup and data recovery. VMware's SD-WAN™, HCX and vSphere-based workloads were used to support the transition to minimise the risk to sensitive data.

## The Challenge

In 2018 JWS needed an IT infrastructure refresh to improve organisational agility, resilience and innovation and determined that a move from using dedicated data centres to using cloud resources would produce efficiencies and reduce operational overhead.

The IT team had to complete major upgrades to the existing data centre infrastructure layer at least once every three to six months across everything from the virtualisation environment to hardware and storage. Every update carried risk and demanded enormous time and resources from the IT team of 14, with some engineers working almost solely on the upgrades.

However, it needed to find a cloud solution and a transition path that would not disrupt its operations and that would enable it to maintain data security. It also needed to be able to support services based on applications that would have to continue running on dedicated platforms.

JWS CIO Ross Forgione said, “We needed a cloud strategy that would actually allow us to maintain services, in an ongoing fashion, while maintaining continuity. We had to find a transition path that allows us to simultaneously keep the business running. At the same time, we had to be aware of what applications will still need to run on a traditional platform and what the implications would be in that space.”

At the time JWS had a traditional data centre based IT architecture using two data centres, one live and one backup. The firm’s IT team was responsible for managing all resources in these data centres from hardware through to software.

JWS is subject to the strict data governance and data protection requirements of client data imposed on all legal firms, as specified by the Australian Privacy Principles under the Privacy Act 1988, as well as its own data governance and privacy rules. These requirements are especially important to consider in any modernisation path.

Importantly, JWS does not own client data that it holds, so it adds an additional level of encryption, managed by the client, to secure client data. When first contemplating a move to cloud it was unable to find a provider that could support this.

An additional challenge to JWS’s data storage and security was the need to ingest and secure several terabytes of client data in short order.

JWS’s key stakeholders are the managing partners, the chief operating officer, its finance leaders, and its board, which comprises partners active in the firm. The board raised a number of questions on moving to the cloud that proved difficult to answer.

- Where does the cloud reduce cost?
- Where does the cloud make us proficient?
- Does it streamline our processes?
- How does it allow us to be nimble and take advantage of new opportunities?
- How are we going to fund this?

JWS needed to estimate the ongoing costs of operating in the cloud, but was unable to get estimates of variable costs in which it had sufficient confidence. A particular issue was the cost of moving data to and from the cloud, because data volumes are heavily dependent on legal case work and extremely variable.

“The biggest component of variable cost is that there are fees associated with traffic moving to and from the cloud and across the different cloud environments,” Forgione said. “Because that traffic is dynamically driven by the users and the work they do, it’s an elastic cost.”

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“We had a two-week window of [VMware] Professional Services engagement that got us ready to do the migration from on-premises to VMware Cloud on AWS. We executed the lion’s share of the migration over a weekend with only a couple of minor things that we had to resolve. That’s unheard of, and I’ve done multiple data centre moves and relocations.”

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ROSS FORGIONE  
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER,  
JOHNSON WINTER & SLATTERY

## The Solution

By early 2019, cloud services had matured to a point where JWS was comfortable it could meet its complex security requirements and provide significant value to the business. JWS began its search for a new operating environment based in the cloud. Because JWS was already using VMware Horizon on premises, they were keen to explore VMware's hybrid cloud solutions. The VMware Professional Services team identified that VMware Cloud on AWS would give JWS the flexibility it needed to scale and run production applications cost effectively with the added benefit of giving it access to AWS Native Services and AWS's extensive product suite.

JWS partnered with VMware Professional Services for the migration. VMware Professional Services worked closely to understand JWS' unique needs and to ensure the transition was made quickly and efficiently. Servers were migrated during business hours, with no disruption to JWS's operations.

JWS went live with VMware Cloud on AWS within a month. Typically, moving from one data centre to another takes nine to 12 months of planning. JWS only took two weeks to transition from its own data centres to the cloud.

Forgione said claimed functionality and performance had been achieved "But it's important to understand that we did spend a bit of time after that, just ensuring we could tweak and tune."

VMware SD-WAN by VeloCloud®, VMware HCX and VMware vSphere®-based workloads were used to support the transition so as to minimise the risk to sensitive data. With the deployment of server and VDI workloads to the new cloud, JWS needed direct connect services deployed to AWS. VMware SD-WAN provided flexibility and was able to optimise clouds, while VMware HCX simplified application migration, making the move to VMware Cloud on AWS fast and highly secure.

VMware's hybrid cloud solutions greatly reduced cost uncertainties for JWS. "If we had not used VMware Cloud on AWS and we had to add a service, for example, our compute needs would have been incrementally added and that would have been a variable cost for us," Forgione said.

"We got the best of both worlds. We took the environment at a fixed price for three years' worth of commitment. And we're fairly confident we won't outgrow the processor, memory, storage, and networking allowances we put in place.

"That left the only variable being the traffic volumes, which we spent a lot of time focussing on modelling... trying to look at what systems generated the traffic in what direction and tried to model that into the AWS network environment. We felt we got to within about 10 to 15 per cent of what we thought it was going to be."

## Outcome

With the migration to VMware Cloud on AWS, costs have been lowered and determining the costs of providing IT services to the business has become much simpler. JWS predicts it will save \$750,000AUD over three years through reduction of operational costs and CAPEX. JWS is now billed by suppliers of software running in AWS for actual usage. These metrics provide better support for business decision making and for justifying proposed initiatives to management.

JWS is now also able to easily scale up resources in line with business growth and Forgione says once all the company's software suppliers deliver cloud versions of their products the company will move IT entirely to the cloud. "IT just becomes a fee for service and scale. If we grow from 300 to 400 people, it's just a case of 'I'll have another 100 of those, please'. You get that flexibility."

JWS has a policy of continuous innovation which requires potential new applications to be spun up and tested. Previously it would have built a server, installed the new application and set access permissions for users. Now it can quickly spin up a server in AWS, install and test the application and take it down or convert it to a production system as required.

The move to cloud has greatly simplified JWS's backup and recovery strategy. It still needs licences from backup software suppliers, but all backup data is now stored in Amazon S3. In the past, long-term data storage was on backup tapes off site, and if a request came in to recover some of that data the tape would have to be retrieved and read.

When JWS ran its own data centres, upgrades were typically undertaken overnight on Saturdays by the IT team. With the VMware Cloud on AWS environment, upgrades happen during working hours by shifting workloads to spare capacity, performing the upgrades and then restoring these workloads. This is a positive change for business efficiency and quality of life for IT staff.

Moving forward, as vendors of JWS's existing applications deliver modernised cloud versions, JWS will be easily able to adopt and migrate the applications' data to the cloud, further improving both performance and cost savings.