



Technology Solutions Provider Softchoice Launches Cloud-Smart Migration

Founded in Toronto in 1989, [Softchoice](#) delivers information technology solutions to customers in the U.S. and Canada. The company specializes in cloud migration, adoption and management; software asset management; and digital workplace, security and data center modernization.

Industry

Technology

Strategic priorities

- Cloud Transformation

VMware footprint

- Azure VMware® Solution

Softchoice is a software focused IT solutions provider that equips organizations in the U.S. and Canada to be agile and innovative, enabling their employees to be engaged, connected and creative at work. A specialist in cloud management, migration and adoption services, and an industry leader in Azure implementations, Softchoice enlisted its professional services organization to design and deploy Azure VMware Solution to migrate its on-premises data infrastructure to the cloud, realizing a 25 to 30 percent reduction in operational and capital expenditures and proving its own ability to deliver cloud solutions.

Softchoice centers its IT infrastructure on Azure

Founded in Toronto in 1989, Softchoice delivers information technology solutions to customers in the U.S. and Canada. The company specializes in cloud migration, adoption and management; software asset management; and digital workplace, security and data center modernization. Publicly traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange, Softchoice employs about 2,000 people and earned gross sales of approximately USD \$2 billion in fiscal year 2021.

A leading provider of cloud solutions to enterprise and mid-market customers—including holding the largest global market share of Azure implementations—Softchoice embarked on an ambitious business transformation project placing Azure at the heart of its infrastructure strategy.

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Addressing the complex decision matrix of cloud migration

Softchoice faced a mix of familiar challenges. The company had already migrated its mission-critical cloud native supply chain and financial ERP solutions to Azure, but other systems running on-premises in the company's data center, and older solutions running on a VMware software stack, presented tougher obstacles. Running some applications on-premises and others in the cloud created infrastructure complexity Softchoice wanted to eliminate.

To address these issues, Softchoice would normally complete a hardware upgrade, routinely refreshing its data center to accommodate a wide range of applications. This refresh cycle came every three years. During each of these resource-intensive upgrades, the company regularly moved legacy applications and hardware to a secondary data center. Many were 32-bit workloads or used less often, and though unlikely to expand beyond their current footprints, Softchoice needed to preserve them for compliance and auditing requirements.

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“We didn't see the legacy environments scaling up or growing over time. They were going to be scaled down, but it wouldn't happen overnight,” says Lester Moniz, director of IT operations at Softchoice.

With its most recent hardware refresh in 2016, Softchoice would have been on track for its triennial data center upgrade in 2019. But with an IT strategy to launch all new platforms on Azure, the company faced two scenarios: The company could continue running its expensive, labor-intensive data center to host these older workloads, or it could devote precious developer resources at significant expense to refactor them to run on Azure.

Softchoice needed a smart, cost-effective solution to pave a path from its on-premises environment to the cloud, one that could extend its existing VMware workloads to the Azure environment and provide operational consistency and integration with native Azure services.

A seamless migration from on-premises to cloud

Softchoice turned to its own professional services division to plan and execute the migration, effectively becoming its own customer. The company selected Azure VMware Solution to move its VMware application environments to the cloud, skipping the refactoring altogether. With this obstacle resolved, the company could go all-in on Azure and complete the migration before its scheduled 2022 hardware refresh deadline.

“We had to do something one way or another. We could stay in the data center and replace the physical hardware, or we could modernize and move to cloud. Either would bring significant expense. With Azure VMware Solution, we were able to use in-house VMware skillsets that were already in place and future-proof our infrastructure,” says Moniz.

Embracing the simplicity and freedom of cloud

Azure VMware Solution yielded significant benefits for Softchoice. The company was no longer bound by the burdensome demands of physical IT infrastructure, including significant capital investment associated with operational, maintenance and physical plant costs.

“We could avoid the CapEx expenditure to upgrade and also redeem the OpEx associated with running a physical data center by moving to a multi-cloud environment,” says Moniz.

Freed from the expense of the data center, the company can now devote resources to preparing and scaling workloads to maximize Azure assets. “Those savings can then be offset against the cost of moving to Azure VMware Solution because there was no refactoring needed to move the loads across to the new environment,” says Moniz. “It was easy to move the virtual servers from the physical data center to the Azure VMware Solution platform.”

As expected, within months, Azure VMware Solution delivered Softchoice a 25 to 30 percent reduction in costs.

The simplicity provided by the cloud environment promises long-term benefits, including savings realized by transferring on-premises licensing to Azure VMware Solution.

Once applications were migrated to Azure VMware Solution, Softchoice took advantage of its proximity to the wide array of native Azure services to modernize those workloads, using Azure File Share to deliver workflow efficiencies and Azure Security for robust intelligence that now protects the company’s cloud environment.

Since the existing operational and development environments live on VMware solutions, Softchoice employees have experienced a seamless transition. Most were unaware the applications they regularly used had migrated to the cloud. “The goal was to preserve and continue running the business-critical applications for users without alerting them to the full infrastructure swap that was taking place underneath, and in practice the users have seen no disruption and have been largely unaware of the changes,” says Moniz.

Moving the ball forward on the cloud journey

And finally, engaging in-house experts to carry out the implementation yielded considerable savings and preserved crucial institutional knowledge. “It was critical for us to be able to demonstrate we have the skills to help our customers and we can walk the talk,” says Moniz. “In our line of business, it was critical to us that we could execute the project using internal skills. It is important for us to be able to say to our customers, ‘We’ve done exactly what you’re doing, and we can help you through the same cloud journey,’” says Moniz.

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