



Business challenge

Decision Focus needed to develop and deploy their new GRC software quickly but also needed to assure their security-conscious enterprise customers that the solution would be delivered via a secure-to-the-core cloud platform.

Transformation

Instead of taking 18 months to develop their new Decision Focus Next (DFN) software as a service (SaaS) platform, Decision Focus deployed DFN in six months. Designed to improve management of governance, risk management and compliance (GRC) workflows, DFN's accelerated delivery was made possible by the microservices-based architecture and scalability of IBM® Cloud™.

Results

6-month rollout

from start of product development to full-scale deployment

100% microservices architecture

for rapid customization and unlimited scalability

Reduced complexity for workflow management and reporting

with streamlined user interfacing and automated reporting

Decision Focus

The speed strategy—getting to market faster with IBM Cloud

Founded in 2004, **Decision Focus** provides clients with easy-to-use, visually-based SaaS solutions to manage workflows, automate reporting and derive strategic insights for corporate governance, risk management and compliance. With headquarters in London, UK and additional offices in Copenhagen, Denmark and Sweden, Decision Focus serves medium and large multinational enterprises involved in financial services, transportation, management consulting, information technology and other industries.

“IBM Cloud is more than cloud services. They are a partner built for entrepreneurs that want scale and global reach.”

— Jon Tollerup, Chief Executive Officer, Decision Focus

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Navigating a new risk landscape

Businesses around the world operate in an increasingly complex regulatory environment with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the US's Sarbanes-Oxley and Dodd-Frank acts, the Basel III global standards for financial institutions and many other governmental ground rules. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in significant penalties for businesses and corporate executives.

In response, the market for GRC software is growing rapidly. GRC tools help integrate and manage IT operations that are subject to regulation, identify risk exposure, track progress toward goals and prepare reports for audits.

Earlier generations of GRC software typically focused on "point" tools such as spreadsheets, email messages and slide presentations. However, point solutions required large, expensive staffs and could not keep up with the increasing tempo of regulatory changes. In addition, GRC software vendors were unable to release new versions fast enough to prevent "audit anxiety" — concerns that a business could be audited and fined for missing a rule change.

"What if we could make GRC software run like a machine and make this just another operational

process, like payroll?" says Jon Tollerup, Chief Executive Officer of Decision Focus, a provider of service management software for enterprise-level customers. Tollerup had a vision for integrating GRC software functionality at three levels:

1. Gathering regulations and other data
2. Managing role-based workflows for day-to-day maintenance
3. Delivering automated reports for decision-makers.

Tollerup's biggest concern was not the design of his new product, but how long it would take to develop the software.

"Since we were a startup and had limited funds, we had to find ways to eliminate hurdles and huge costs," says Tollerup. "I didn't want to spend two years on something that didn't work, and we had to be able to scale up and not have to rebuild everything later. What really enabled us to move forward with this project was IBM Cloud."

Making the first move count

When Decision Focus started developing DFN, their new GRC SaaS platform, three attributes of the IBM Cloud proved essential in supporting and accelerating DFN development: its 100 percent microservices-based

architecture, its simplified management, and its security-rich cloud platform.

Building microservices on IBM Cloud enabled Decision Focus to set up a highly distributed development network, with developers contributing components from Denmark, the UK, Romania and Sweden. "With parallel development, we don't need to wait for one thing to finish before starting the next," says Tollerup. "And once you are in the cloud, you can scale up immediately."

Decision Focus discovered that managing DFN software development on IBM Cloud was much easier than initially expected. "We didn't read any manuals — we just started using it," says Tollerup. "After a few questions in the chat room, that was it. We had a very knowledgeable support person on call, but I may have talked with him only three times during the past few years."

When the time came to introduce DFN to their customers, Decision Focus also appreciated how well IBM's reputation for designing security-rich solutions paved the way toward product acceptance. "We know from our experience that IBM is a very trusted brand," says Tollerup. "When we say we are running 100 percent in the IBM Cloud, our customers know that it is secure and 100 percent in order."

The end game is in the cloud

At the start of the software development process, Decision Focus projected an 18-month timeframe to build, test and deploy its new DFN product. However, by using IBM Cloud as a software development platform, the company deployed DFN in only six months, saving a significant amount of time and money.

Delivering DFN on IBM Cloud enables Decision Focus to rapidly respond to client customization requests, with typical change orders completed in less than an hour.

The company is also taking advantage of IBM Cloud architecture to add new services, such as IBM QRadar® Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) software and new, high-performance disaster recovery elements.

The DFN platform is currently being used by a variety of enterprise-level businesses in transportation, logistics, financial services and other global businesses. One the largest customers of DFN software is IBM, which uses the system to track compliance for global applications.

Although DFN was initially designed to meet the GRC needs of large, enterprise-level businesses, smaller companies can also derive benefits

from the solution. “Managing regulatory compliance is a disproportionate burden for small and midsized businesses,” says Tollerup. “If you’re not huge, how are you going to pay for expensive people to manage this? That’s why we’re making GRC something that can be managed by smaller companies to help them stay relevant and compete.”

The ability to manage regulatory compliance over many different domains and geographies is important to Decision Focus. “If you want to work from anywhere and have customers all over the world in any time zone, any geography and still stay compliant with local laws, then you can’t just use any provider,” says Tollerup. “You need to be able to have a lot of control over your data by city and country, and that’s what the IBM Cloud gives us.”

“With IBM Cloud, it’s no longer a problem to develop and deliver SaaS software worldwide. We’ve developed a solution for large enterprises that, for them, feels like an app for the iPhone. It’s that simple.”

— Jon Tollerup, Chief Executive Officer, Decision Focus

Solution components

- IBM® Cloud™
- IBM QRadar® Security Information and Event Management (SIEM)

Take the next step

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