



Business challenge

To thrive in the crowded market of governance, risk and compliance (GRC) software vendors, Aponia Data Solutions needed to sharpen its competitive edge and differentiate itself from its rivals.

Transformation

Assisted by technical and business support from IBM, Aponia Data Solutions focuses on cloud-based services, helping sellers boost client engagement and build valuable long-term partnerships.

Business benefits:

Enables

quicker creation of innovative solutions, driving impressive business growth

3x faster

ROI for clients, thanks to more lean, agile development process

3-4 weeks

to develop prototypes for new offerings, helping the company win or fail fast

Aponia Data Solutions Sparks business growth by switching to ultra-flexible cloud service delivery

Aponia Data Solutions was founded in 2014 to help enterprises turn big data into a valuable, intuitive resource. Based in New York, the company draws on decades of experience implementing solutions to mid-market and enterprise clients in the financial services, healthcare, and insurance sectors, and offers cloud solutions focused on data security, risk management and compliance.

“IBM has been central to our cloud transformation—they are our main strategic partner.”

Jason Juliano

CEO

Aponia Data Solutions

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Gaining agility to drive ahead

For startups aiming to make a mark in a crowded marketplace, the ability to innovate fast is critical. Aponia Data Solutions, founded three years ago to offer on-premise governance, risk and compliance (GRC) solutions to companies in the financial services, healthcare and insurance sectors, quickly recognized the need to adapt to a more agile model in order to achieve sustainable business growth.

Jason Juliano, CEO of Aponia Data Solutions, explains, “In the early days, we found that we were successfully delivering on our clients’ expectations, but were not attracting new clients at the pace we had projected. We realized we were operating in an exceptionally competitive market, but in order to differentiate ourselves, we had to take a step back to objectively evaluate the value we offered and projected to the market.

“We discovered that we were allowing an older, slower market model to inform our offerings, when what we really needed to do is provide thought leadership and technology solutions more representative of the future.

“For instance, in our core markets, enterprises traditionally have been nervous about moving data off-premise, so we originally catered to those concerns. But as we observed improvements in cloud technology security, as well as the multitude of other benefits the cloud offered, we knew we needed to make a shift to the cloud while educating prospective clients on the returns they could achieve with Aponia’s new, flexible service models. We also knew we needed the right partner to support us in our transition from on-premise to cloud.”

Transforming the business model

To get one step ahead of the competition, Aponia Data Solutions transitioned to delivering next-generation cloud-based GRC solutions. The company is building many of its offerings on a range of IBM solutions, including IBM® PureData® System for Analytics, IBM Watson® Conversation, IBM Streams, IBM Watson Machine Learning, and IBM BigInsights®.

The IBM tools provide the flexibility for Aponia Data Solutions to design pure-cloud offerings harnessing machine-learning and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The company also develops hybrid cloud solutions for clients in the banking and healthcare sectors, where strict compliance regulations require some data remains on-premise.

To align more closely with the cloud model, Aponia Data Solutions has modified its sales strategy, focusing on building valuable long-term partnerships with customers.

Jason Juliano explains, “Moving to a monthly fee model means we have had to significantly change how we approach potential clients and incentivize our sales teams. We are now rewarding cross selling and up-selling of services to our existing customers, rather than focusing on one-off hardware or software deals. To achieve this, our teams are concentrating on building up customer engagement to become their trusted technology partners for solving business challenges, rather than simply product vendors.”

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Cloud has also transformed the way Aponia Data Solutions provides ongoing support to its customers. If clients encounter problems with IBM Cloud offerings, Aponia Data Solutions often only needs to raise a support ticket with IBM whereas previously the company would have had to deploy an engineer to the client's location to resolve the issue.

The shift to cloud has also reduced the need for Aponia Data Solutions to purchase and maintain infrastructure in-house, freeing up cash flow for investment in other areas. Most of Aponia's operational functions run on the cloud, which allows the company to stay nimble.

“We’re aiming to gain a market-leading rating on the Gartner Magic Quadrant—and with IBM at our side, we think that’s an achievable goal.”

Jason Juliano, CEO, Aponia Data Solutions

Developing innovative new solutions

Switching to the cloud service delivery model is enabling Aponia Data Solutions to differentiate itself from its competitors and to develop attractive new customer offerings to fuel growth.

Jason Juliano elaborates, “We started out as a bootstrap organization, with limited resources at our disposal. Now, thanks to the move to cloud, we are in a much stronger position and we’re expanding the business significantly. In fact, we are growing so fast we have had to move to a larger office. We are now starting to seek external investors, and we’ll be devoting more resources to recruiting specialist cloud salespeople and our digital marketing strategy. We’re aiming to gain a market-leading rating on the Gartner Magic Quadrant—and with IBM at our side, we think that’s an achievable goal.”

Working with cloud services makes developing new solutions a much faster, agile process. As a result, Aponia Data Solutions can run test cycles for three or four weeks. If the solution does not deliver on pre-defined goals, the company can simply end the cycle and start another iteration with alternative tools without incurring additional cost. Critically, the company no longer needs to ship racks and send engineers to client sites to spin up demos—saving time and improving productivity.

“With cloud, we can win or fail fast during testing and development,” says Jason Juliano. “When creating traditional on-premise products, it could take three to six months to purchase and install the software and infrastructure, develop the POC, and then make the sale. With that model, there’s a risk that you only pick up glitches in production.

“Working with cloud makes the process so much easier. In some cases, it takes just eight weeks for us to create a solution that achieves a return on investment (ROI) for our clients. That’s around three times faster than the on-premise model.”

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Jason Juliano, CEO, Aponia Data Solutions

For one client, Aponia Data Solutions has produced an innovative predictive risk management tool for audit and compliance managers, built on IBM Watson Conversation. The solution enables users to direct questions to the Watson chatbot, which then interacts with the underlying database and predictive algorithms to calculate risk levels, and help the company identify gaps between regulatory requirements and real-life operations.

In the future, Aponia Data Solutions plans to leverage IBM Global Financing to offer even more flexible payment plans for customers.

Jason Juliano concludes, “Our transition to a cloud provider has been a really smooth, fast process; the whole transition was completed within 12 months. IBM has been central to our cloud transformation—they are our main strategic partner. Without them, we could not have achieved our ongoing success.”

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Solution components

- IBM® BigInsights®
- IBM PureData System for Analytics
- IBM Streams
- IBM Watson® Machine Learning

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Cloud, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/cloud

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