Business challenge

Grupo IFM's IT infrastructure was complex to maintain, and relied on the skills of key employees. How could the IT team increase efficiency, reduce risk and find more time for customer-facing projects?

Transformation

Working with IBM Business Partner S&M Cloud, Grupo IFM placed its ERP systems on a simpler, more standardized environment running on virtualized servers and storage in the IBM® Cloud™.

Natxo Cortés
Head of IT
Grupo IFM

Business benefits:

10%
reduction in IT workload, freeing up hundreds of hours for more valuable work

Mitigates
risk by reducing reliance on specialist staff with infrastructure skills

Zero
impact on clients: the cloud provides the same performance as an on-premises system

Grupo IFM
Providing agile, modern technical services with IBM Cloud

Headquartered in Valencia, Spain, Grupo IFM is a group of energy, manufacturing and graphic arts companies which includes Cartonajes Mora, Iberica de Aparallajes and Porcelanas Industriales. Combined, the group employs more than 250 people. The group's member companies share centralized IT services across a large number of processes and solutions.

"Moving to the IBM Cloud has reduced the workload of our IT team by around 10 percent. We have freed up hundreds of hours that the team can now spend on more valuable, client-facing projects."

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Head of IT
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The race to stay ahead

Digital transformation is a key theme across all industries, as companies seek to harness innovative technologies to achieve competitive advantage. That's why many groups of companies pool their IT resources together, to optimize costs and drive innovation.

However, the relentless pace of technological evolution means that these specialized IT units must continually adapt to offer the most efficient and up-to-date services to their other member companies within the group. And as the systems change and develop, the knowledge needed to maintain them also changes.

For example, new technicians often lack experience with legacy systems, but are reluctant to spend time gaining expertise that will soon become obsolete. This means IT teams must either spend time educating new technicians about their legacy environments, or replace the technology altogether.

Grupo IFM, which delivers corporate services including IT solutions to its member companies, was suffering just such a problem. The organization was running some of its ERP applications on a custom-built server infrastructure, which was growing old and hard to maintain. Staff were spending a significant amount of their time managing the servers, and much of the company's knowledge of the infrastructure was concentrated in just a few employees

Natxo Cortés, Head of IT for Grupo IFM, says: "All the companies in Grupo IFM require efficient, flexible IT infrastructure, to help them continue to deliver stellar service to their customers, so we started considering how to modernize to keep up with the pace of change. The real trigger was realizing that some of our key people were approaching retirement age, so we needed an infrastructure that we could manage without relying on their specialist knowledge."

Grupo IFM decided to look to an outside provider to create a new, more standardized infrastructure that would free up its IT team to focus on service delivery, and help it stay ahead of the competition.

A helping hand

After exploring various options from different providers, one of Grupo IFM's suppliers recommended IBM Business Partner S&M Cloud, who in turn introduced the company to IBM Cloud technologies. Grupo IFM was impressed by the dependability, manageability, efficiency and scalability of the IBM Cloud.

Cortés remarks: "The level of service from both IBM and S&M Cloud was very high. S&M Cloud helped us to remain up-to-date with the latest technology, and provided expert assistance during the implementation phase."

Grupo IFM deployed IBM Cloud bare metal servers, which it uses to run its ERP applications in a virtual server environment. The bare metal servers provide all the performance and configurability that the company needs to get the best performance from its ERP applications. Meanwhile, backups are stored using IBM Cloud Object Storage System™, which provides a highly scalable, cost-effective and reliable platform for business-critical data.

"We had always worked with on-premises infrastructure before, so we were concerned about having to connect to a server in the cloud," Cortés recalls. "But S&M Cloud and IBM made it seamless. Our clients didn't even notice the change-over, and there has been no impact on performance."

To manage the cloud environment, the company can access a web-based administration portal that provides full control of the IBM Cloud servers and storage environments—making it simple to provision and scale systems. Meanwhile, IBM provides 24/7 support, and handles all the routine infrastructure maintenance tasks.

"We get support when we need it, so we don't have to invest a lot of time in understanding all the intricacies of the hardware—but we also have the ability to manage the environment and make changes by ourselves," says Cortés. "It's the best of both worlds."

He adds: "The level of support has been amazing—the IBM team are real professionals, they're very proactive, and they take care of everything. Throughout the whole project we only had one technical issue, and IBM fixed it in less than two hours. The environment is critical for our business, so having that level of service is extremely important."

Peace of mind

Moving to the IBM cloud has given Grupo IFM's IT team the ability to focus on service delivery, rather than routine IT management—helping them support clients and work on innovative projects. 24/7 support from IBM gives the company confidence that any unforeseen issues with the infrastructure will be fixed promptly, without needing to invest time and resources in server and storage management.

Cortés comments: "The IBM Cloud solution eliminates our worries about maintaining legacy technology. As our infrastructure continues to scale and evolve, the cloud also gives us the agility we need to adapt to oncoming challenges and seize new opportunities."

On a practical note, the solution has helped to relieve pressure on Grupo IFM's IT team, and reduce its reliance on the specialist technical skills of key individuals.

Cortés explains: "Moving to the IBM Cloud has reduced the workload of our IT team by around 10 percent. Managing our old infrastructure was the equivalent of a full-time job for one person, so we have freed up hundreds of hours that the team can now spend on more valuable, client-facing projects."

Grupo IFM's positive experience with IBM and S&M Cloud has encouraged the company to move forward with its cloud strategy.

Cortés concludes: "S&M Cloud has certainly persuaded us of the value and quality of IBM's products, solutions and support. With their help, we will be able to keep abreast of our rapidly changing industry, and continue to provide innovative IT services to our member companies, so they can serve their customers better."

Solution components

- IBM® Cloud™ bare metal servers
- IBM Cloud Object Storage System™

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Cloud infrastructure as a service, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit ibm.com/cloud/infrastructure

S&M Cloud was founded in 2013 with a mission to help clients take advantage of the agility, scalability, flexibility and cost savings of cloud technologies. The company focuses on technical excellence and a strong commitment to customer satisfaction. To learn more, visit smcloud.es

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