WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT AUTHORITY

finds insight in multi-cloud management and billing

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西九文化區管理局
West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

Daniel Chong, General Manager, Innovation and Technology at West Kowloon Cultural District Authority says multi-cloud management and billing is a hassle to the IT operation.

A statutory body responsible for developing and managing the 40-hectare cultural complex designed to be the cultural and arts centre for Hong Kong and worldwide, the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) will ultimately include 17 venues. It brings together local and international artists and audiences through the provided platforms for expression and opportunities for collaboration and fostering the organic growth of Hong Kong's artistic, creative and design industries.

Ten venues with buildings in the complex, including the Xique Center for Chinese opera, the M+ Museum, the Freespace and Art Park are already open for contemporary performance, exhibitions, workshops and events. The Hong Kong Palace Museum will open this year, followed by the Lyric Theatre in 2024/25, creating a cultural and collaboration hub for artists not just for Hong Kong, but for Asia and the wider world.

Situation

With its wide breadth and scope, multiple venues and customers including both visitors and artists, comes significant technology – and cloud – needs.

"The majority of our systems are on the cloud," Daniel says. That includes SalesForce for customer relationship management, Oracle enterprise resource planning and Workday, with systems running across AWS, Azure and Tencent's clouds.

"We have so many different cloud systems and we had a headache on the administration side because of the budget constraint," Daniel says.

The WKCDA spends millions of dollars on cloud hosting services per annum.

"It is quite huge for us, compared with a small firm," Daniel notes.

But Daniel had another issue to contend with: He was receiving big invoices from different cloud vendors without breakdowns by individual system or departments within WKCDA.

"We couldn't figure out how much we spent on each of the individual systems, or by department to analyse the utilization for future planning."

With the cloud contracts less than half-way through, more than half of the money allocated had already been used up which drew serious concern to the IT management for desperate action.

"I needed someone to help me to do some forecasts on how much spending was left for the coming few months or the rest of the contract. It is not easy for WKCDA internal staff to do it without the access to the system, without the experience on that."

It was a problem that left Daniel unable to give his board all the information he wanted to provide. He also wanted to be able to tell each of the business partners, such as the M+ Museum, how much they were spending and provide information on how they could ensure they were getting value for money, reducing spend if it wasn't justified.

"I wanted to be able to look into the individual applications for each business partner and find improvements.

"We needed analysis on the traffic, so that we were able to make improvements."

Solution

Daniel turned to Insight.

The IT services provider is providing ongoing multi-cloud and billing management, support and technical professional services for WKCDA.

"Insight is able to do the administration and analysis for the cloud systems hosting management and that resolved my problem and gives me a chance to reassign my resources to other valuable tasks as well," Daniel says.

Insight has provided architecture guidance on the setup of hosting platforms, according to business application requirements, and highlighted inconsistent environment configurations.

"They told us for example that we had some of the development machines unnecessarily turned on and that was spending some of the contract amount unnecessarily.

"It's a simple thing, but without Insight's experience and assistance we may not have discovered that."

Sara Ng, Insight Sales Manager, says Insight's work has included providing network configuration, Domain Name Service, load balancer, VPN setup and Content Distribution Network configuration and security profiles

settings, along with assisting with the deployment of middle-ware, business applications and APIs from Source Control Management (SCM) tools with the use of DevOps.

Insight's involvement with WKCDA has extended beyond the multi-cloud billing and management, with Daniel noting that Insight has helped with other projects, including valuable work on security and with website performance testing.

"The performance test for our website was a major thing, alongside the administration on the cloud hosting," Daniel says.

Many of WKCDA's visitors from Mainland China were reporting difficulties with WKCDA's website, including booking tickets, because the site was 'too slow'. It wasn't a problem they were seeing in Hong Kong, however.

"We sought help from Insight to see whether we could conduct performance tests locally in China, because without that we couldn't get the problem resolved."

Insight found a partner in China and the performance testing was done in a number of major cities. Analysis showed it wasn't an issue with WKCDA's site.

Insight's reach was also invaluable in enabling WKCDA to pay the partner in China – something it couldn't do directly as it has no local representative or business partners in China.

"But Insight resolved that for us as well."

The company also worked with WKCDA's security teams to review security profile settings to fit with the latest business application requirements and implement security settings according to requirements from business applications and security measures by the WKCDA.

Adds Sara: "With Insight's breadth of services and geographic reach, we have been able to address their requests on different developments, for example if they have concerns about security, we have the resources to support them. If they have training needs, we can also support them."

Results

Insight's administration hasn't just made it easier for Daniel to provide valuable information to his board and his business partners.

"We are, first of all, able to make sure our costs are kept in a reasonable manner and are spent in a reasonable manner. Secondly, we can make sure the systems are fully utilised and deployed as expected," he says.

"I don't want to have a system that is a waste and not being fully used by the users or the public.

"Some of our systems, like SalesForce, are quite expensive and we want to get the return on that investment, but up until now we could not get a solid plan because we didn't have a clear view of where exactly the spend was.

There's also the overall cost saving – money which can be redeployed elsewhere, Chong notes.

"We are hoping to reduce costs around 20 percent," he says.

But there's more to the partnership than just cost savings and efficiencies.

Insight is, Daniel says, a true business partner for WKCDA.

"Whenever we have a problem they will get back to us promptly and they won't talk cost first, they talk about the solution and understand our problem first. That is great. They treat us as a partner, rather than a commercial customer.

"Others sometimes consider things as outside the project scope and immediately say they have to additionally charge. I don't like that. What we need to have is a business partner, and that's what we have with Insight," he says.

"They are experienced, knowledgeable and helpful. And they're also able to line up other parties to assist us when needed, which is something I really appreciate."