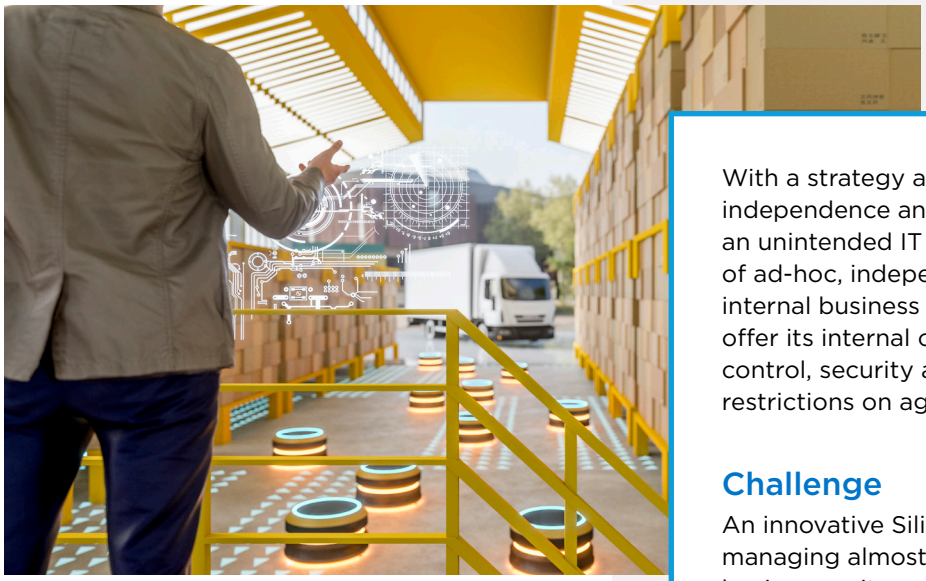
Eliminating IT Sprawl



With a strategy and organizational culture that values independence and agility, the company found itself with an unintended IT consequence: A sprawling collection of ad-hoc, independently managed systems created by internal business units. The IT department needed to offer its internal clients an alternative that would enable control, security and cost reduction while avoiding restrictions on agility and innovation.

Challenge

An innovative Silicon Valley company has trouble managing almost 200 ad-hoc systems built by internal business units.

Solution

The Lumen℠ Cloud enables the manufacture to provision cloud-based applications to internal clients via an internal self-service portal.

Impact

The IT department can control systems used by internal clients while maintaining the freedom and agility the company values.

Business and IT

Out of Sync

The company's diverse departments were not able to stay in sync with IT. The company's strategy demanded rapid, agile deployment of systems but the IT department's reasonable need to maintain control and assert project priorities created a vacuum. Internal IT requests (such as mobilizing project management and provisioning out systems) took two to three weeks to handle, often forcing internal departments to circumvent IT and buy services or procure standalone hardware.

"Our IT organization lacked the agility to be able to efficiently manage those demands," said the Cloud Services program manager. "Our IT processes can take far longer than what some of our internal customers require to be agile."

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For instance, a department wanting a Web-based sales configuration application might deploy it on a third party commercial hosting service and charge it to a corporate credit card. This was a large-scale problem, with 190 uncontrolled systems operating within the company. The IT department faced some serious issues with this practice:

- **Lack of visibility and control** – The IT department had little idea of what business-managed applications were running internally, what data was being hosted offsite, or even where many business assets were located.
- **Security risks** – There were no effective controls to ensure that proprietary data was being protected, and no way to guarantee that security patches were being applied.
- **Financial waste** – The company was not getting any value for this volume of IT purchasing and application support model. Each internal application was costing tens of thousands of dollars per year to manage.

Envisioning a cloud solution

The IT department resolved to be proactive and tackle the issue of "shadow IT" and ad-hoc systems before it became a larger problem. "It was a big, unwieldy process that was getting more and more difficult to handle in-house," said the Cloud Services manager. "We needed a way to corral those applications, and aggregate them in a secure, compliant, standardized fashion."

The decision to find a cloud-based solution was relatively simple to make. The cloud offered the company the kind of flexibility it needed to provision a wide range of systems quickly to many different internal clients. However, not any cloud solution would do. The company began searching for an enterprise-grade cloud platform for high performance infrastructure that could meet the company's service level agreements (SLAs) as well as its security and compliance policies. This included having built-in disaster recovery. Also important were single sign on and identity management, direct link VPN into the company's own data centers, and DNS integration that could effectively turn its public cloud into an extension of the its network.

The "IT as a service" cloud portal, powered by Lumen Cloud

After conducting an exhaustive request for proposal (RFP) process, the company decided to use an enterprise cloud platform to provide a solution to the problem of sprawling, uncontrolled internal systems. Lumen Cloud provides an exceptional experience in meeting all of the company's business requirements. "We were impressed by how we were able to get new applications deployed on Tier 3 within minutes with the platform's automation and template capabilities," the Cloud Services manager said.

The new cloud-based infrastructure as a service (IaaS) program enables the company's IT department to offer its internal clients a largely self-service mechanism for provisioning system resources for each department's unique needs. For example, the portal contains preset WordPress templates that are mapped to the DNS and identity management (LDAP) systems. An internal user can use the portal to self-provision a basic intranet site in one hour. At the same time, it ensures that the IT department is firmly in control of the IT assets in use.

The company conducted a proof of concept that allowed it to see just how easy (and fast) it would be to provision out new IT environments. According to the Cloud Services manager, "We wanted to get our hands dirty by simulating the internal customer experience." The program is now in an early adopter phase, with 25 of the company's 190 uncontrolled internal systems now migrated to the new platform. Twenty-five additional systems are in the migration process.

In addition to providing a robust IaaS platform, a program was enabled to address a number of structural and procedural challenges that had to be resolved before the system could launch:

- **Integrate with Global Service Desk** – The company IT wanted its internal clients to be able to access a Web- based self-provisioning tool. To do this, it had to integrate with existing global service desk. The Lumen Cloud application programming interface (APIs) is used to make this a relatively seamless process, and the portal has been able to offer internal clients sophisticated resources on-demand. For example, an internal user can now map the company's configuration management system (CMS) to Lumen Cloud infrastructure through a simple interface. The IT department can easily know what the IP addresses are for the new system and what software and data are running on each specific internal client instance.

- **Build a Service Catalog** – The "IT as a Service" program portal offers its users a service catalog that is easy to navigate and use. The company has adapted the distinctive service catalog of the Lumen Cloud for this purpose. For example, if a user wants to include single sign on (SSO) for their system then can discover and deploy it through the service catalog.

Gaining efficiency and control while increasing agility

The program is in its early stages, but the project has already demonstrated strong business results. Benefits include intangible gains in security, IT control, business operational efficiency and agility. In terms of hard-dollar ROI, it is also proving itself to be a worthwhile financial investment:

- **Intangible Benefits** – The program translates into improved IT visibility into internal systems. Security and compliance policies can now be enforced, avoiding, for example, accidental release of proprietary data or personal information. Operationally, it reduces the amount of internal resources that each department has to allocate to its internal systems. Agility benefits from the ability to self-provision systems on demand.
- **Financial Impact** – The program consolidates the purchasing of departmental systems, achieving a substantial cost savings for the company. On the income side, faster deployment of sales-facing applications enables more rapid sales pipeline growth and opportunities to increase revenue.

About Lumen Cloud

Lumen Cloud is the complete platform to easily manage your entire business application portfolio, from development to business-critical workloads. Lumen Cloud offers high-performance, scalable, self-service virtual machines across our global network of data centers, including Hyperscale instances for distributed workloads that require maximum performance. And Lumen Cloud provides built-in automation, orchestration, and management tools for an IT-ready and developer-friendly platform that is flexible, scalable, cost effective and highly manageable. For more information, visit www.ctl.io

Solution Highlights

- On-demand, automated services provide ease of development and a deployment with strong management capabilities
- Supports the full app lifecycle across greenfield and legacy applications
- All fabric services are universally available: call from web apps virtual machines
- Enterprise-grade features, from secure/isolated environments to built-in HA, backups, and autoscale
- Enables you to choose a single, enterprise-grade provider for all cloud services

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