IBM

bluechip

Business challenge

Demand for flexible and cost-effective cloud services has been and continues to be rising. To respond, Blue Chip continues to develop its operations while ensuring rapid, reliable and robust service.

Transformation

Blue Chip expanded its software-defined IaaS offering by deploying IBM® Power Systems™ servers and IBM Storage®, engaging IBM Global Financing to enjoy the benefits while minimizing the impact on cashflow.

Business benefits:

10% growth
in revenue realized, with further year-on-year increases projected

48-hour
build time achieved for new cloud environments accelerates client onboarding

100+
physical servers migrated to the Blue Chip cloud for one customer in under four weeks

Blue Chip
Helping businesses harness the power of agile, enterprise-class cloud infrastructure

Founded in 1987, Blue Chip (external link) is a leading provider of managed hosting and co-located hosting services, hybrid cloud solutions, IT maintenance and monitoring services, and business continuity solutions. With multiple locations in the UK and in continental Europe, and with a software development division based in Sri Lanka, Blue Chip has deep expertise in designing, building and maintaining IT infrastructures around the IBM Power Systems platform.

"With the support of IBM Global Financing and enterprise-class IBM infrastructure underpinning our cloud services, we can enable more businesses to reap the rewards of a cutting-edge tier four datacenter."

Chris Smith
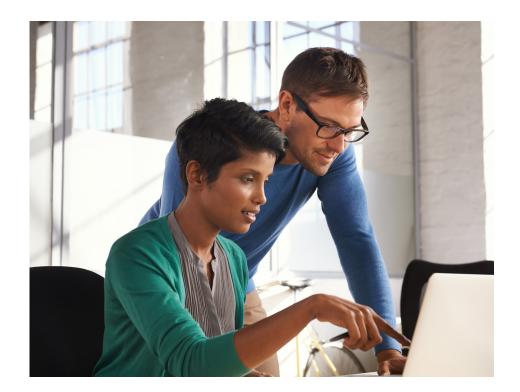Director of Sales Marketing
Blue Chip

Share this

Embracing the cloud

Enticed by its ability to reduce costs, boost scalability and drive innovation, more companies are looking to move the core systems supporting their business into the cloud. As a result, competition is heating up for cloud providers, making it critically important to ensure that their managed services deliver the reliability, flexibility and scalability that customers expect.

Keen to seize on opportunities for growth created by increasing demand for cloud computing, managed services provider Blue Chip set out to increase capacity in its dedicated cloud managed services for IBM AIX®, IBM i, Windows and Linux workloads.

Chris Smith, Director of Sales Marketing at Blue Chip, explains: "Increasingly, companies are looking to free themselves from the cost and management burden associated with running core applications in-house and, at the same time, gain more flexibility to adapt to market changes. Ultimately, they want to focus on running their business not managing a data center."

He continues: "Similarly, many small and medium sized organizations are looking to grow and develop their systems with leading enterprise-class technologies, but often lack the skills and resources to build and manage their own IT infrastructure."

Blue Chip has already helped countless organizations harness the power of cloud computing. Now it was ready to expand and enhance its Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) offering, with a focus on offering even faster cloud deployments and more flexible pricing models.

"With more cloud service providers entering the market, it's essential that we can ensure consistently excellent levels of service and offer competitive terms to our clients," says Chris Smith. "Not only does this mean delivering ultra-reliable services, but also maintaining compliance with stringent data protection regulations and minimizing the impact of our operations on the environment."

"IBM Power Systems and IBM Storage combined with Red Hat solutions has significantly accelerated the time it takes for us to onboard a new client into a dedicated cloud platform. Previously this used to take a couple of weeks, and we can now do this in just a matter of days."

Chris Smith, Director of Sales Marketing, Blue Chip

Increasing capacity

To meet growing demand for its IaaS offering, Blue Chip scaled up its datacenter by deploying 150 IBM Power Systems servers, each powered by the latest generation IBM POWER9™ processor technology.

Chris Smith explains, "As long-term users of IBM technology, becoming early adopters of IBM POWER9 architecture was a no-brainer. They combine high performance and scalability with exceptional reliability, giving us the confidence to invest in the technology to the tune of 150 servers. The seamless interoperability with Red Hat tools was another factor in our decision, as Red Hat solutions play a central role in the orchestration of our cloud resources."

To deliver new cloud environments quickly and easily, Blue Chip deployed Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform (external link)—a solution that helps the company automate the configuration and ongoing management of cloud instances across multiple operating systems, including AIX, IBM i, Windows and Linux.

Blue Chip also implemented IBM FlashSystem® storage and IBM Spectrum® Storage Suite tools to create a software-defined storage environment that delivers high performance alongside simple management.

Narendhar Tangella, Data Management Technical Architect at Blue Chip, comments, "We considered other major storage vendors, but IBM offered everything we needed from the functional perspective as well as enabling us to leverage the deep skills we have built up over a number of years. IBM Spectrum Storage Suite brought under a single convenient license several technologies we were already using, giving us a highly integrated software-defined environment."

For Blue Chip, the two most important elements in the IBM Spectrum Storage Suite are IBM Spectrum Control and IBM Spectrum Virtualize. IBM Spectrum Control provides centralized monitoring, reporting and automation of storage management tasks, and helps to simplify and de-risk the migration of data to IBM FlashSystem storage.

IBM Spectrum Virtualize uses IBM SAN Volume Controller technology to virtualize multiple types of capacity (even non-IBM capacity) into a single pool, and provides advanced compression, migration and snapshot tools. By deploying the IBM Spectrum solutions, Blue Chip has ensured it is also prepared to provide hybrid cloud solutions to customers, if and when required.

Tailored solutions

Recognizing that each business has unique infrastructure requirements, Blue Chip wanted to offer customers a range of storage options in its cloud environment alongside tailored pricing.

"While IBM FlashSystem will host many of our clients' most critical production data, not every workload calls for the highest performance—sometimes cost-efficiency is more of a priority," explains Chris Smith. "So, for companies that need secondary storage tiers we'll continue to use our existing IBM Storage arrays."

To enable a cost-effective backup service for clients, Blue Chip deployed IBM Cloud® Object Storage.

"Many of our clients are required by regulators to store certain data for lengthy periods," says Chris Smith. "IBM Cloud Object Storage is perfect for meeting client's data archiving needs, as it offers large volumes of affordable storage

while also providing the possibility for rapid access to this data via hybrid cloud environments as and when our clients need it."

By engaging IBM Global Financing, Blue Chip was able to deploy its new IBM Power Systems and IBM Storage solutions and then defer payment to reduce impact on cashflow. For the IBM Storage solutions, Blue Chip selected a financing option that enables it to pay for the storage once it has reached a certain utilization factor.

"Thanks to IBM Global Financing, we can invest in evolving our technical capabilities without having to make a large one-off capital investment," explains Chris Smith. "By spreading the cost of our infrastructure investments, we can protect our cashflow and pass on any savings from this commercial flexibility to our clients."

Increasing market share

Since scaling up its IaaS cloud offering with IBM Power Systems and IBM Storage, Blue Chip has been able to offer customers even more flexible, tailored cloud environments while also boosting its revenues.

"Last year alone we increased our revenue by 10 percent, and we expect to sustain organic growth of up to 10 percent year-on-year," explains Chris Smith. "Because IBM Power Systems and IBM Storage have enabled us to expand our operations, innovate and serve more customers, they have contributed to this success."

Not only is Blue Chip better placed to grow, the company can now create and deploy new cloud environments in under 48 hours and has committed to this turnaround time as a service level agreement.

"IBM Power Systems and IBM Storage combined with Red Hat solutions has significantly accelerated the time it takes for us to onboard a new client onto a dedicated cloud platform," explains Chris Smith. "Previously this used to take a couple of weeks, and we can now do this in just a matter of days— sometimes even faster depending on the client's needs and existing infrastructure.

"As a result, we can help companies adapt quickly to sudden market changes, which has proved to be increasingly

important given the additional pressures placed on businesses by the global coronavirus pandemic. Since enhancing our data center with IBM Power Systems, we helped a leading newsagent move over 100 physical servers to our cloud in under four weeks. We also migrated up to 400 servers for a leading UK bank via a remote deployment."

As well as being able to provide clients with ultra-responsive services and flexible payment terms, IBM solutions have helped Blue Chip to offer cutting-edge cloud computing to a broader range of companies.

"Our close partnership with IBM plays an important role in the development of our own IT infrastructure and the services we're able to offer our clients," says Chris Smith. "For instance, consolidating our storage infrastructure into a software-defined

environment with all-flash storage has helped to boost the environmental sustainability of our services by reducing data center floorspace, energy and cooling requirements."

Having built its primary tier four datacenter with sustainability in mind, Blue Chip takes its commitment to reducing the environmental impact of its operations seriously. In addition to ensuring that its datacenter cooling systems are among the most efficient in the world, the company powers its IT infrastructure with certified renewable energy sources and is helping groundskeepers plant trees in the local forest of Marsden Vale.

As well as enhancing the environmental sustainability of Blue Chip's operations, IBM Power Systems will help the company to win new customers in the financial services sector.

Chris Smith explains: "The resilience of IBM Power Systems—and the fact that it is widely trusted throughout the financial services industry—has played a significant part in helping us achieve compliance with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards. Ultimately, this will help us to encourage more banks and payment providers to work with us."

He concludes: "With the support of IBM Global Financing and enterprise-class IBM infrastructure underpinning our cloud services, we can enable more businesses to reap the rewards of a cutting-edge tier four datacenter at a fraction of the cost of running and maintaining their own systems. We look forward to deepening our partnership with IBM in the years ahead as we continue to grow our operations and evolve our services."

Solution components

- IBM® Cloud® Object Storage
- IBM FlashSystem
- IBM Global Financing
- IBM Power Systems™
- IBM POWER9™
- IBM SAN Volume Controller
- IBM Spectrum® Storage Suite
- IBM Spectrum Control
- IBM Spectrum Virtualize
- Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform (external link)

Take the next step

To learn more about the IBM Power Systems please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: /it-infrastructure/power

Connect with us

IBM