

“We needed a ‘digital Sherpa’ with the consultancy, services and technology to enable a DevOps approach. Fujitsu was the obvious choice, displaying a deep understanding of where we were and where we needed to go.”

John Foster
Operations Manager
Formwize

Formwize adopts a DevOps culture with help from Fujitsu to speed up time to market for its products and services.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Technology
Founded: 2005
Website: formwize.com

Challenge

Formwize has employees around the world, involving multiple time zones, languages and technical disciplines. This made effective collaboration difficult and slowed time to market for application changes and deployment.

Solution

The company turned to trusted partner Fujitsu to introduce a DevOps culture. Following a free CALMS* (Culture, Automation, Lean, Measurement & Sharing) assessment and a five-day XpressWay consultancy, Fujitsu provided a number of automation tools to enable the rapid deployment of Formwize applications to any cloud platform.

Benefits

- 20 times more agile when delivering new applications for customers
- 30 per cent more agile when automatically deploying daily application changes
- Common global DevOps dashboard and shared library enables effective employee collaboration
- Applications can be deployed to any hypervisor or cloud platform seamlessly
- CALMS score has risen from 23 to 88 per cent

Customer

Headquartered in Perthshire, Scotland, Formwize builds SaaS-based smart form solutions, providing data collection to GDPR standard including survey, poll, event, test and customised forms for a range of SME and blue-chip clients. The company is powered by world-class IT systems using a hybrid IT model, which allows it to ensure high levels of service and placement of data in geographies to suit customers' needs. Formwize can also automatically scale services to meet peak or seasonal demands.

Products and Services

- FUJITSU DevOps initial capability assessment
- FUJITSU DevOps XpressWay consultancy
- FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter
- FUJITSU K5 GitHub Enterprise
- FUJITSU Cloud Service K5
- FUJITSU Software Enterprise Postgres

Aiming for a DevOps future

Formwize has experienced rapid growth in recent years, leading to the recruitment of specialists from around the world to help develop and deploy its smart forms system to various customer on-premise and cloud platforms. However, as these recruits work across multiple time zones, languages and disciplines such as development, testing, networking and security, real-time collaboration was a challenge. The company recognised that adopting a DevOps culture would help but lacked skills, knowledge and the necessary tools.

"We were quite immature in terms of DevOps because Development and Operations ran within their own distinct realms," explains John Foster, Operations Manager, Formwize. "We wanted to bring them closer together to increase the marketability of our apps while also enabling agile delivery into various cloud platforms that each have subtle differences."

This trend to move away from on-premise solutions to fully hosted cloud solutions proved to be a key driver behind introducing DevOps. However, Formwize needed a trusted partner to guide it on its journey. The company was already using FUJITSU Cloud Service K5 and FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter to automate the deployment of its application to cloud, so Fujitsu was the first port of call for advice on DevOps.

Detailed assessment enables action

Formwize began by completing Fujitsu's free CALMS* (Culture, Automation, Lean, Management & Sharing) assessment, which demonstrated that it fell woefully short, with a score of 23 per cent across the CALMS areas. The next step was a five-day value stream exercise, known as FUJITSU XpressWay, which provides an accelerated cost-effective output-focused IT business consultancy. This provided an outcome-based overview of the processes and pipeline, enabling Formwize to map out its overall DevOps objectives.

FUJITSU GitHub Enterprise, a web-based hosting service for version control using git; FUJITSU Software Enterprise Postgres, an open-source based, high-performance, high-reliability, cost-effective relational database management system; and FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter enable Formwize to model, assemble, deploy and migrate its applications and code for all hybrid IT environments. All these tools are provided on a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model, meaning minimal upfront investment is required.

"Thanks to 100 per cent REST API coverage and an open source command-line interface (CLI), we easily integrated FUJITSU UForge with both our existing tool chain technologies and those proposed by Fujitsu. This included tools to automate the steps which were currently being performed manually, such as code update delivery and machine image building," remarks Ian Robertson, CEO, Formwize. "Fujitsu also introduced us to Microsoft Visual Studio Team Services (VSTS) which provides a complementary platform that our global developers can access from anywhere. UForge picks up artefacts from the VSTS & Bamboo pipelines and automatically generates virtual machines, images or containers which are then deployed on our customers' target clouds, such as Azure."

Instant collaboration speeds time to market

By implementing a broader DevOps culture that extends beyond simply tooling, Formwize has empirically measured an immediate reduction in time to market for new application feature delivery. The company measured 30 per cent faster deployment for daily application changes and is now 20 times faster in delivering new application deployments for customers. Recently, it deployed its open source software version, FormChimp, for a client onto Microsoft Azure in under an hour.

"The fact that we can deliver change more quickly through the development, testing and quality assurance cycle means deployments that once would have taken ten days can now be done in a single day," comments Foster. "Moreover, we get faster customer feedback relevant to functionality and usability, which we can then feed back into production."

Fujitsu also provides a single console for different global teams who can build new features as the customer requests them. At the same time, most of the underlying work is automated by robotics, removing both cost and the potential for human error from the equation. A recent success was the rapid development of a GDPR-compliant version of the Formwize software, which enabled the company to target new business opportunities.

"We are now capable of delivering to any cloud platform quickly and securely, allowing us to market more aggressively and grow the business," concludes Foster. "Fujitsu has been very understanding and supportive. The tailored advice it provided has proven fruitful and sets us in good stead for the future. The fact that our CALMS score has risen to 88 per cent proves how successful we have been."

* CALMS is a maturity assessment framework which can be adopted by organisations to determine where they are in their Agile DevOps journey against the ideal "Agile DevOps State". It does this by assessing the organisation against five "critical success factors" required to successfully achieve Agile DevOps which are "Culture, Automation, Lean, Metrics & Sharing". Once this assessment has been completed, next steps are then agreed on how to improve the organisation's current position and progress to next maturity level.

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