formwize

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>
> **James Neilson**
> **Chief Digital Officer**
> **Formwize**

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At a glance

Country: UK
Industry: Technology
Founded: 2005
Website: formwize.com

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Challenge

Keeping Formwize's cloud-based survey platform online is vital, so the company is always looking for ways in which it can improve availability. It wanted to apply an intelligent automation layer that could address any application uptime issues without human intervention.

Solution

Formwize turned to long-term partner Fujitsu and its new AIOps solution, using policy-based autonomics to detect service deterioration or outage and automatically shift from one cloud provider to another.

Benefit

- When Formwize's cloud supplier experienced catastrophic failure, service was automatically shifted to a new platform
- The transition was so seamless that Formwize's technical team didn't realise there had been any issues and no customers were impacted
- AIOps reduces costs incurred by expensive engineering departments and the need for human operator intervention
- Formwize engineering talent can be focused on developing their customer applications

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Customer

Headquartered in Perthshire, Scotland, Formwize builds web-based form solutions, providing 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 secure placement of data in geographies to suit customers' needs. Formwize can also automatically scale services to meet peak demands.

Products and Services

■ FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter with AIOps

Ensuring application availability

Formwize provides both on-premise and cloud-based online survey and form services to its customers, allowing them to enjoy the most flexible method suited to their business. However, no matter how the service is delivered, maximum availability is crucial; put simply, if the service is down, the company won't make money. From a cloud perspective, that means ensuring uptime around the clock.

"We must ensure zero data loss and 100 per cent availability, which you would expect from the world's leading cloud platforms," explains James Neilson, Chief Digital Officer, Formwize. "However, there are always unforeseen events and incidents with the potential to disrupt operations."

Formwize relies on hyper-scale cloud providers to support its business and customers, however, in the summer of 2018, its usual supplier suffered a catastrophic outage due to extreme weather events. The hottest summer in generations physically melted switches in its Irish data centre, leading to instant downtime. Normally, this would have left Formwize out of service, however in this case, it was fortunate to be taking part in a field trial of the new Artificially Intelligent Operations (AIOps) functionality in FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter.

"We have worked with Fujitsu for a number of years and found it to be the ideal partner for deploying our hybrid online form platform, particularly in the field of DevOps," adds Neilson. "So when Fujitsu approached us regarding its new UForge AppCenter capabilities, we were keen to trial it. Thankfully, that meant when disaster struck, we had a solution in place to mitigate the impact."

Smart AI mitigates risk

FUJITSU Software UForge AppCenter provides an autonomic management model which enables 'always-on applications' across multiple public clouds. Using policies and sensors, the platform can detect service deterioration or outage and automatically shift from one cloud provider to another without human intervention.

When the heat disrupted service in Dublin, these intelligent agents picked up and moved Formwize's platform and switched it to a competitor completely seamlessly. When normal service resumed, the AIOps platform then transferred it back. This transition was so smooth that even Formwize's technical team didn't realise there had been any issues and no customers were impacted. Fujitsu's balanced contractual relationship with both cloud providers ensured that Formwize could enjoy this flexibility without additional cost.

"We need to automatically build and deliver, then constantly evolve our web-based SaaS application for our customers without armies of human engineers. Our application needs to be delivered to any target platform, including containers, cloud, virtual machines and bare metal, which our own customers dictate. We need our application to be always-on and if it fails it needs to be re-started elsewhere, ideally with our alternate hosting vendor," continues Neilson. "Re-start must be immediate and with an up-to-date synchronised copy of our customers' data. It can also never lose any data and we want all this automated to keep costs down. I want robots to get up and fix things in the middle of the night. This can free my team to concentrate on developing the application experience."

Fast, efficient and automatic service management

FUJITSU's AIOps platform not only ensures Formwize's availability, it also performs numerous other beneficial tasks—including scaling up and down to meet fluctuating demand, fixing faulty application processes and addressing incidents as they happen, based on policies and learning from AI-based monitoring systems linked in by Fujitsu engineers.

"In this case, Fujitsu's AIOps solution was able to lift and shift our operations seamlessly without us even noticing, but it can also manage day-to-day tweaking of performance," says Neilson. "That means if there are issues with disc space, processor stress or application processes causing a slowdown in service, Fujitsu's AIOps solution can investigate the cause, remediate it and report back to us."

An additional benefit is that this reduces both the costs incurred by repeated service desk calls and the need for human intervention by Formwize engineers, whose talents can be deployed more effectively elsewhere.

"Service calls cost money and outages cost money so having autonomic platforms taking care of these mundane tasks makes perfect sense," comments Neilson. "Fujitsu's 'triple AAA' hybrid IT guarantee ensures automatic build and fix; autonomic operations and autonomous healing. That reduces the burden on our staff and frees them to focus on more strategic projects."

The field trial has been proved a great success, paving the way for a wider deployment of Fujitsu's constantly evolving AIOps across Formwize's cloud platform.

"The Fujitsu automated and intelligent monitoring tools drive down costs while enhancing our service availability," concludes Neilson. "And, they help us cope with new challenges as they surface."

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