

## Technology

# Helping Aidmatrix deliver critical humanitarian relief assistance via the Microsoft Windows Azure cloud platform

A large, thick red chevron pointing to the right, positioned behind the text "High performance. Delivered."

High performance. Delivered.

### Client profile

The Aidmatrix Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit organization committed to providing supply chain management, fundraising and volunteer management solutions that, in turn, help relief organizations procure, manage and deliver aid when humanitarian crises arise around the world. More than 40,000 business, nonprofit and government partners use Aidmatrix's solutions to mobilize more than \$1.5 billion in humanitarian relief each year.

### Business challenge

While Aidmatrix had historically managed its applications from third-party data centers in the United States and several other countries, the organization recently decided to move the provisioning of its IT infrastructure to "the cloud." Aidmatrix believed a cloud-based IT infrastructure would not only lower its operating costs, but also allow it to access additional computing capacity as needed to respond more quickly and effectively to crises anywhere in the world.

Ultimately, Aidmatrix selected Microsoft® Windows® Azure™ as its cloud platform because of its high efficiency, agility and ease of use. Also important was the fact that Windows Azure is hosted at one of six data centers worldwide, meaning that Aidmatrix's critical applications would almost always be hosted close to a disaster area.



Microsoft, which had helped Aidmatrix develop a proof-of-concept to confirm the appropriateness of the Windows Azure platform, suggested that Accenture and Avanade—an Accenture majority-owned company dedicated to helping clients maximize returns on their Microsoft investments—be engaged to help migrate and integrate a number of critical applications to the new platform. Aidmatrix agreed. In addition to having extensive Windows Azure skills and experience, Accenture brought a deep understanding of the Aidmatrix organization, its technical environment and its business objectives. For nearly 10 years, Accenture had provided technical and consulting services to help the organization chart a course toward high performance. As Michael Ross, Vice President of Delivery

at Aidmatrix, noted, "We had a long relationship with Accenture, so we had no questions about the quality of the work that would be delivered or the experience that would be brought to bear."

### How Accenture helped

Moving Aidmatrix's applications to the cloud was a highly collaborative effort. The joint Accenture and Avanade team managed the design, development and migration of several core applications (and the data upon which those applications relied) from Aidmatrix's legacy data center environments to the cloud. This team operated primarily with the Accenture Azure factories in India and the Philippines—which provide resources and tools to accelerate the

delivery of Windows Azure solutions. Once the applications were in working order in the cloud environment, Aidmatrix assumed testing and production responsibilities. Throughout the project, Microsoft provided technical expertise and guidance as issues emerged.

The migration program was carried out in a series of phases over a six-month period. Specifically, the joint team:

- Developed a customized operations framework to simplify the system, resource and data monitoring that was necessary during the transition. The new solution—a configurable “application harness”—made it easier for Aidmatrix to monitor the vital characteristics of its applications and respond appropriately to issues or server demands as they arose.
- Migrated the Aidmatrix Network® Online Warehouse application, which is used to manage purchased and donated inventory contained within humanitarian relief warehouses. This effort involved porting a standard Microsoft .NET Framework 2.0 inventory warehouse with Microsoft SQL Server® back-end to .NET Framework 4, Windows Azure and SQL Azure.
- Migrated the Aidmatrix Virtual Aid Drive™, an application that enables organizations to conduct fast and easy-to-implement humanitarian relief fundraising campaigns. In managing this effort, Accenture and Avanade used BlueDragon software from New Atlanta Communications, which allowed the team to redeploy Cold Fusion legacy code in the Windows Azure environment, thereby eliminating the need for costly code rewrites.

- Migrated the Aidmatrix Network® In-Kind Donations Management application, a highly scalable solution that helps coordinate the tracking and logistics of in-kind donations for large relief efforts spanning multiple agencies.

Additionally, the Accenture and Avanade team helped Aidmatrix determine the best timing for migrations of critical applications such as the Aidmatrix Network® Online Warehouse Plus application. As Mr. Ross pointed out, such guidance helped lower the cost of initial migrations and ongoing application maintenance. “Accenture and Avanade did a great job of understanding our needs, identifying what Microsoft technologies were currently available and what would be available in the future, and helping us make some good decisions. They helped us pick the migrations to do sooner, and also helped us plan and design some applications like Online Warehouse Plus, which we will deploy later this year when enhancements from Microsoft will be available.”

## High performance delivered

With the help of Accenture, Avanade and Microsoft, Aidmatrix has transitioned from an environment comprising a mix of .NET Framework 2.0, SQL Server 2005 and other technologies to an environment standardized on .NET Framework 4, SQL Azure, and Windows Azure platform technologies and Windows Azure platform technologies. According to Mr. Ross, “the level of technical experience and knowledge that Accenture and Avanade brought was really helpful — both in terms of their ability to perform at a high level, as an extension of our organization, as well as their ability to deal with a rapidly changing technology set.”

For Aidmatrix, the new cloud-based Windows Azure platform offers a number of distinct advantages:

- Elasticity and scalable capacity to meet unpredictable demand.
- An accelerated ability to bring new and critical applications to market. For example, prior to the Windows Azure solution, it took up to four weeks to deploy applications and secure the necessary computing capacity to support the humanitarian agencies. Today, those applications are made available in a matter of hours.
- Cost savings of approximately 20 percent, due to the reduction of the number of servers Aidmatrix needed to own or lease.
- An improved ability to store massive amounts of logistics data that can be used for business intelligence analyses.

Together, these advantages are helping to ensure that Aidmatrix has the ongoing ability to provide fast, reliable and invaluable support to humanitarian agencies that, together, serve millions of people in their times of greatest need.

## About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with more than 236,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world’s most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$25.5 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2011. Its home page is [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).

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