Powering on-time payment for Onguard's customers

Thanks to a close partnership with Rackspace, Onguard's order-to-cash platform can now be more responsive to customer requests.

Our customer

Onguard provides an integrated platform of intelligent software solutions that help to streamline the order-to-cash process. Via the platform, customers have access to data-driven credit risk management and predictive payment behaviours capabilities, as well as e-invoicing and automated cash allocation.

The obstacles they faced

The processes for launching new environments were labour-intensive, which made it difficult for Onguard to respond quickly to the requests of its customers. Onguard needed a new private cloud platform that was engineered from the ground up to support automation, and was backed with security technologies and services to protect sensitive data.

How we helped

Onguard uses Rackspace Private Cloud powered by VMware, with an Intensive support level. Rackspace is on hand to help with day-to-day operations, and is in constant communication with the DevOps team. Onguard also benefits from round-the-clock support, with a team of VMware Certified Professionals available 24x7x365.

What we achieved together

Agility has dramatically increased as a result of the collaboration. It used to take six hours to launch a customer environment, but now it takes fifteen minutes. Updates are now automated and release cycles shorter, so Onguard gets more feedback from customers, more often, and can respond to it more quickly.

ONGUARD

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Streamlining cash flow

Onguard provides intelligent software solutions to streamline the order-to-cash process, including risk management, credit management and collections. Companies can use all or part of the platform to cut the time it takes to collect payment after a sale is made (measured as the days sales outstanding, or DSO). This, in turn, improves working capital.

The company embeds machine learning and AI into its solutions to help customers optimise their payments processes while maintaining sustainable customer relationships, as Marieke Saeij, Onguard's CEO, explains.

"An example scenario might be when the number of invoices outstanding builds up, suddenly the customer becomes a debtor – there's a negative change in the relationship. Our platform tweaks communications to protect the relationship as much as possible, so the customer doesn't feel like a debtor. By working out whether customers respond better by phone or email, or pay quicker when provided with a payment link, for example, we can nurture them towards bill payment."

Big data and artificial intelligence are used in real time to ensure that companies can make the best decisions about how to interact with customers regarding payments. "Without

the level of intelligence our platform has, there might be a one-size-fits-all escalation procedure," says Saeij. "It's better to segment customers between regular non-payers and those that wouldn't warrant an aggressive dunning procedure."

Using Onguard solutions, companies can become more data-led and efficient in all of their payments processes, in a way that also improves customer relationships.

With these solutions in Rackspace's private cloud, Onguard can have confidence that their business model is future proof. "Using Rackspace's private cloud offering makes it easier to respond to market demand while also ensuring that customers' environments

and applications are always up to date," says Saeij.

Choosing Rackspace

Previously it took as long as six hours to launch new customer environments, so Onguard wanted to introduce more automation. "That meant we needed a new environment designed from the ground up to support automation," says Tim Blok, team leader, development, Onguard. "At the same time, we had growing and increasingly demanding security requirements. We wanted to work with a partner using the latest technology, and with broad expertise in security."

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> Tim Blok, Team Leader, Development, Onguard

To support growth and achieve its goal of automating customer deployments, Onguard chose Rackspace Private Cloud powered by VMware with Intensive support. It provides a fully managed, single-tenant, dedicated VMware private cloud, with a 100% network uptime guarantee, with round-the-clock support for any issues arising. There's a one-hour hardware replacement guarantee, and a storage device access guarantee. Onguard can also call on Rackspace's talent pool of VMware Certified Professionals for Fanatical Experience™.

"The finance sector is increasingly willing to adopt cloud solutions from trusted partners with demonstrable capabilities to secure their data," says Blok. "It's vital for us to have stringent security standards and Rackspace provides us with that and customers take peace of mind from our partnership, because it's a well-known name. They know they can trust us with their data, and trust us to provide a high level of uptime and service, because we have Rackspace on board."

Increasing responsiveness

The new environment enables Onguard to be much more responsive to customers. The time to launch a new environment has been cut from six hours to fifteen minutes. "The automation in spinning up new environments really benefits our engineers," says Blok. "They have a DTAP (Develop, Test, Acceptance and Production) environment, which they didn't have before. It's hugely important because every customer has their own

specific environment. Now, we can verify it all works as expected, before moving to running in production."

He adds: "The nice thing about collaborating with Rackspace is the team at Rackspace: they have a solutions team at their end dedicated to helping our engineers with setting up, designing, architecting and maintaining our environment."

Rackspace looks after the maintenance and day-to-day management of the infrastructure for Onguard. "It's important to us that maintenance is taken care of, so we don't have to put our own teams on it," says Blok.

The DevOps team at Onguard collaborates with Rackspace daily, using a Slack channel to keep in touch. "The tactical day-to-day interaction is on point, and crucial for helping us deliver on our strategic objectives," says Blok. "It's important for us to make the right decisions about our architecture and to choose the right solutions. Rackspace helps us to make the right choices. It's one of the reasons we chose them. They have their finger on the pulse."

Extending automation and self-service

Rackspace and Onguard have been working together now for three years. The initial delivery committee was made up of the Onguard DevOps team, development managers and the CTO working together on the push to automation. Now, Onguard is offering self-service functionality for other departments, including customer service who can now spin up their own environments for troubleshooting, without needing to rely on the DevOps team.

The speed of the new environment also supports Onguard's agile processes. "When we launch more quickly and more often,

we get quicker and more frequent feedback from customers," says Blok. "Shortening this feedback loop has helped the development team to build better products. We can quickly adapt to customer requests."

Future plans

"We plan to grow our Rackspace platform and engagement in the same manner that we intend to grow our order-to-cash platform. That is, steadily and with ever-increasing speed to market on new solutions, and a continued focus on automation that maximises everything the Rackspace platform has to offer," says Blok. "Our business strategy is to grow beyond our home base of Benelux to other European countries, and we know that Rackspace can support us in that."

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About Rackspace

At Rackspace, we accelerate the value of the cloud during every phase of digital transformation. By managing apps, data, security and multiple clouds, we are the best choice to help customers get to the cloud, innovate with new technologies and maximise their IT investments. As a recognised Gartner Magic Quadrant leader, we are uniquely positioned to close the gap between the complex reality of today and the promise of tomorrow. Passionate about customer success, we provide unbiased expertise, based on proven results, across all the leading technologies. And across every interaction worldwide, we deliver Fanatical Experience™ — the best customer service experience in the industry. Rackspace has been honoured within the top 100 Great Places to Work for more than a decade.

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