A move to Rackspace Private Cloud powered by VMware expands SaaS capabilities by 300%

iSAMS, a leading global web-based MIS, delivers high-performance school administration capabilities to 500,000 daily users with 100% uptime.

Our customer

Since 2005, iSAMS has provided Management Information Systems to help schools run more efficiently, help teachers focus on what matters, and transform parent and student engagement.

How we helped

Through the deployment of VMware® Private Cloud and managed virtualization, Rackspace Technology helped iSAMS eliminate overprovisioned hardware during school holidays and spin up virtual machines when capacity needs rise.

The obstacles they faced

Running in a small data centre in the UK using just two servers, iSAMS was responsible for both growing its business and the burdens associated with managing an on-premises solution.

What we achieved together

A move to managed private cloud on dedicated hardware gave iSAMS a 300% performance advantage, improved the delivery of its web-based SaaS, and enabled easier capacity planning and adjustments.

isams

15 years of improving access to information for schools

iSAMS services nearly 1,000 schools in countries across the world. Launching commercially in 2005 with just two schools, iSAMS now has presence in over 65 countries globally and services more than 50% of its client base internationally. As a fully remote company, its 100 employees have the option of working remotely or in its office spaces in Sydney and London.

iSAMS' software was inspired by the frustrations teachers in the independent school system experienced with legacy administration systems. The teachers' pain points included the lack of viable channels through which to communicate with parents along with the paper-based nature of crucial documentation such as registrations or admissions.

Today, iSAMS is one of the world's most advanced school-based management-information systems (MIS). This 100% web-based software-as-a-service (SaaS) application is used by teachers, students and parents for accounting, communication, admissions and registrations. It also has a comprehensive API, allowing third-parties to seamlessly integrate with the iSAMS core platform.

When iSAMS began 15 years ago, it was self-hosted in a small data centre comprising two servers, and iSAMS was wholly responsible for maintaining uptime and service of its own servers. iSAMS wanted to prioritise customer service and add to its extensive suite of capabilities to improve teacher and student engagement, but server management was a major roadblock to this ambition.

In addition to the burden of managing its own servers, iSAMS also had to procure its own servers, host them and perform routine backups. This took precious time and resources away from the internal IT team, which wanted to devote more resources to improving its core platform. With a small IT team that was increasingly stretched thin, it soon became apparent that iSAMS required external support in order to simultaneously keep its infrastructure running smoothly and focus on innovating the software.

At this point in its journey, iSAMS was growing rapidly, adding more schools in more countries around the world, as demand for Management Information Systems grew amongst teachers, parents and students. Having the IT team burdened with keeping the lights on was a risk as the business scaled and it became a potential distraction from customer service and software improvements during a crucial growth phase.

A partnership that saves time and reduces headaches

By 2011, the time had come for iSAMS to offload to a managed services scenario in order to facilitate the company's growing technical needs. "iSAMS needed its own dedicated hardware, as there's a big performance advantage to that over public cloud, which has proven itself over the years," recalled Technical Director of iSAMS, Sydney-based Greg Pakes.

To that end, iSAMS engaged Rackspace Technology for managed VMware to oversee its hardware. Since then, iSAMS has had data centre-grade provisioning, which is wholly managed by Rackspace Technology, including the management of the hyper layers and virtualisation.

VMware provides a huge benefit to iSAMS during its seasonal usage spikes, such

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as end-of-term report marking. It is able to utilise VMware's latent capacity in the cluster, and deploy new VMs and resources as needed. In down times, such as school holidays, adjusting the capacity planning and resourcing availability through VMware prevents iSAMS from paying for over-provisioned hardware.

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Greg Pakes, Technical Director, iSAMS

"From a VMware perspective, it's great to have the flexibility to split individual workloads," said Pakes. "If there's anything leftover in latent capacity, Rackspace Technology moves it for us, so it can use its full potential in another cluster."

It's this back-end ease that allows iSAMS to adapt as required in both peak times and down times, without the strain of constant re-provisioning or the risk of wasting capacity.

"Using Rackspace Technology to manage our hardware saves us a lot of time and headaches, and we don't even have to think about it, because we know it just works," Pakes said. "It's been an eight-year relationship now, and nothing has gone wrong."

Growth in hardware supports business scale

Since engaging Rackspace Technology, iSAMS' hardware capabilities have grown 300%. It has been able to move away from the requirement of needing 24x7 uptime from just one data centre, as it now has two data centres running on different sides of the globe. This means that there is always at least one data centre running, with the Sydney centre providing customer support 21 hours per day.

Within a combination of the cloud and an on-premises solution, iSAMS now has more than 1,000+ schools and groups running in Rackspace Technology, with 500,000 users logging in every day. Pakes is pleased to note over the years, it has never experienced downtime.

Pakes also notes that with the added complexity of the niche MIS marketplace for schools, if iSAMS was ever to suffer from unreliability or downtime, this news would quickly spread amongst the community, possibly causing harm to its reputation.

Throughout its relationship with Rackspace Technology, iSAMS has scaled significantly, gone through a seamless acquisition, added capabilities to its software and expanded its international footprint. The largely remote nature of its employees also makes reliable technology an integral part of the way that employees communicate with customers and with each other.

Prioritising personalised relationships

Tapping into the global expertise of Rackspace Technology also means iSAMS' technical team does not need to resolve failures itself. iSAMS can rest easy knowing that Rackspace Technology will jump on any

problems "in a faster and better way than if we were fixing it ourselves," added Pakes.

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The relationship is a personal one, Pakes added. He appreciates having direct access to Rackspace Technology support teams who know iSAMS inside and out and can resolve issues quickly. There are Rackspace Technology team members Pakes has worked alongside for a number of years, solidifying the relationship between the two businesses.

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iSAMS has plans to extend its relationship with Rackspace Technology as it looks to a new model to support its continued growth.

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About Rackspace Technology

Rackspace Technology is the multicloud solutions expert. We combine our expertise with the world's leading technologies — across applications, data and security — to deliver end-to-end solutions. We have a proven record of advising customers based on their business challenges, designing solutions that scale, building and managing those solutions, and optimizing returns into the future.

As a global, multicloud technology services pioneer, we deliver innovative capabilities of the cloud to help customers build new revenue streams, increase efficiency and create incredible experiences. Named a best place to work, year after year according to Fortune, Forbes, and Glassdoor, we attract and develop world-class talent to deliver the best expertise to our customers. Everything we do is wrapped in our obsession with our customers' success — our Fanatical Experience™ — so they can work faster, smarter and stay ahead of what's next.

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