

BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL (BMJ)

Rackspace used their private cloud to provide a secure, efficient environment in which BMJ can operate their business.

BUSINESS

BMJ is one of the world's oldest general medical journals, encompassing 60 specialist medical and allied science journals with millions of readers.

CHALLENGES

BMJ sought a partner to move to a sustainable development cycle of continuous integration and automation using an optimized multi-cloud environment.

SOLUTIONS

Multi-Cloud, Professional Services, Application Services / DevOps , Scalability , Virtualization

PRODUCTS

Alibaba Cloud, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Rackspace Private Cloud powered by VMware®

OUTCOME

BMJ now has a multi-cloud environment, using Rackspace Private Cloud for core infrastructure, AWS for front-end workloads and Alibaba Cloud for Chinese services.



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY



BMJ

Formerly known as The British Medical Journal, BMJ is one of the world's oldest general medical journals, with a history that goes back over 170 years. Over that time, BMJ expanded to encompass 60 specialist medical and allied science journals with millions of readers worldwide.

Now a global brand with a worldwide audience, BMJ helps medical organizations and clinicians tackle today's most critical healthcare challenges. They do this through their digital platform, publishing cutting-edge academic research, providing professional development solutions and creating clinical decision support tools.

"Rackspace was the only provider that stepped up to and completed our challenge successfully. It set the foundations of a fruitful working partnership."

ALEX HOOPER :: HEAD OF OPERATIONS, BMJ

Needing the right infrastructure

BMJ's infrastructure grew organically as new sites, applications and features were commissioned – and it became apparent that the infrastructure supporting the application release process was no longer fit for purpose. So BMJ made a conscious decision early on that they needed a new approach.

"In a way, we were victims of our own success," explained Alex Hooper, Head of Operations, BMJ. "The technology department's focus was on getting the cool new stuff to market and there was little time to go back and revise the architecture. And as our infrastructure grew, so did our technical debt. An expiring hosting contract and the subsequent review of hosting providers gave us an opportunity to pay off that technical debt and to design for the future."

On top of the infrastructure challenge, BMJ had become a 24/7 organization in recent years. Their products had become international in profile, so their tolerance for downtime – scheduled or otherwise – was diminishing.

"We had unwritten SLAs with the business stakeholders," said Sharon Cooper, Chief Digital Officer at BMJ. "They wanted to be able to call the

operations team directly. We needed to formalize our support schedule and reduce our reliance on key support team members."

The real challenge was with the culture and how to move to a sustainable development cycle of continuous integration and automation. To do that, BMJ needed a trusted partner to get the infrastructure in place to create the foundations for real change. BMJ were used to being in control and keeping everything in-house, so they needed a true partnership with the selected managed service provider (MSP) – one that could work within their specific requirements and go above and beyond in what they delivered.

Finding a new partner

The RFP for a new supplier was BMJ's signal, both internally and externally, that they wanted to initiate radical change.

When they started looking for a new managed service provider, BMJ drew up a list of 15 vendors, which was then narrowed to a shortlist of three. These managed service providers were asked to complete a short task to demonstrate their expertise and commitment.

"We wanted someone with the whole package, someone we felt we could work in partnership with. Rackspace had managed AWS, they did hybrid clouds, they could help us expand into China and they had the adaptability to work with us in the way we wanted. Some vendors draw a line – you're either fully managed or not at all, but Rackspace had the flexibility and the know-how to work BMJ's way, and they shared our vision for the future," Hooper explained.

The goal of BMJ's operations team was to move to a fully automated, shared-nothing architecture where each product would have its own set of application and database servers and where code and files could be reliably deployed to each application server.

More than this, the process of moving infrastructure became the lever that could bring cultural change to the organization and cement in place a new DevOps way of working.

"We went from an old way of developing systems to an agile environment," said Hooper. "Some of the problems we had were with automation, but we

knew that to truly solve our problems – as well as support our global growth goals – we needed the right infrastructure to underpin it."

Of all the potential partners BMJ spoke with, only Rackspace was able to deliver on what they promised. That drive and ability to realize the company's vision were key components in the success of the project. By the end of the first year, BMJ had fully virtualized, with over 200 virtual machines running their applications 24/7 in a private cloud infrastructure. The biggest change, however, was in the release cycle and the efficiency improvements that came with virtualization.

"For us, it's all about efficiency," Hooper explained. "Previously we were lucky to do one release a month. Now we do up to three a day. In the past, you could tell in the office when a release was going on – people were on tenterhooks waiting for something to break. Now a new release is uneventful and commonplace. We don't want fireworks when we implement new releases. We want a seamless process."

Automation was a key deliverable. In the process of automating, the interdependencies were managed or removed and the processes were understood, which freed up time to move more new products and solutions. For instance, BMJ moved from delivering content to third parties via weekly batch transfer jobs to creating an API to allow the content to be pulled and services to then be built around the infrastructure.

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ALEX HOOPER :: HEAD OF OPERATIONS, BMJ

However, the successful private cloud solution was only the first step in setting BMJ up for even greater improvements in the future. After their success with the private cloud, BMJ moved workloads into the public cloud, with much of their front-end infrastructure running AWS and utilizing Amazon services such as RDS for their database services and EC2 for compute. This gave BMJ additional flexibility and scalability for maximum agility. They could turn off services, such as their development environment, when they weren't in use.

Rackspace delivers on Eastern promise

Another benefit of using Rackspace's services was their on-the-ground specialist support in China, a growing market for BMJ, which opened their first local office in Beijing in 2015.

"We see the People's Republic of China as a key part of our growing international network," Cooper said. "Therefore, we needed the technical expertise to be able to expand our services into China, and a partner to help us navigate the complex frameworks required to build services there. Rackspace, with their on-the-ground support in China and knowledge of the market, has delivered local public-cloud infrastructure utilizing Alibaba Cloud."

"Previously, we could only offer stand-alone software products in China, which were delivered on physical media and required quarterly updates to be installed by hand," added Hooper. "With Rackspace's help, we now have the ability to offer our cloud-based services to Chinese businesses. This has been made possible by utilizing data centers located in China; we have done this by using Alibaba Cloud, which also gives us all the benefits of public cloud infrastructure."

"When we first engaged Rackspace, they promised to deliver services both here in the UK and over in China. We are delighted that they have been able to deliver on these promises."

"Rackspace, with their on-the-ground support in China and knowledge of the market, has delivered local public-cloud infrastructure utilizing Alibaba Cloud."

ALEX HOOPER :: HEAD OF OPERATIONS, BMJ

A successful journey

When they began engaging MSPs, BMJ had a clear strategy:

- Phase one was to virtualize their infrastructure using a private cloud.
- Phase two was to create a hybrid cloud solution utilizing private and public cloud for maximum agility.
- Phase three was to expand BMJ's cloud infrastructure to China.

Rackspace has delivered on all counts, guiding BMJ on their journey along the way and offering support and assistance when required.

"Rackspace delivered the infrastructure we needed to initiate a change of culture within our organization," said Cooper. "They worked closely with us and offered a professional combination of listening to our needs and giving advice to my team. With our multi-cloud infrastructure, we now have everything we need to deliver a truly global service, and Rackspace has been instrumental in achieving this."

BMJ has seen extraordinary change in their time. Within their recent history, they have transitioned from traditional print media to becoming a digital content provider. With Rackspace's help they now have the infrastructure and culture in place to cement their position as a premier global digital publisher and educator.

Results and benefits:

- BMJ has the infrastructure and culture in place to grow their business worldwide.
- BMJ has a multi-cloud environment, utilizing Rackspace's private cloud for core infrastructure, AWS for front-end workloads and Alibaba Cloud for Chinese services.
- With their technology, they have the infrastructure they need to cement their position as a premier digital publisher and educator.
- BMJ can offer new cloud-based services in China.

ABOUT RACKSPACE

Rackspace is the #1 provider of IT as a service, in today's multi-cloud world. We deliver certified expertise and integrated managed services across public and private clouds, managed hosting and enterprise applications. Because Rackspace partners with the leading technology providers, including Alibaba®, AWS, Google, Microsoft®, OpenStack®, Oracle®, SAP® and VMware®, we are uniquely positioned to provide unbiased advice on the technologies that will best serve each customer's specific needs. Rackspace was named a leader in the 2017 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Public Cloud Infrastructure Managed Service Providers, Worldwide and has been honored by Fortune, Glassdoor and others as one of the best places to work. Based in San Antonio, Texas, Rackspace serves more than 150,000 business customers, including a majority of the Fortune 100, from data centers on five continents.

Learn more at www.rackspace.com or call us at **1-800-961-2888**.

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