Clear Channel Outdoor Swiftly Migrates Production Workloads to Azure

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>
> – Claudio Levi, Clear Channel Outdoor Senior Infrastructure Architect

Background

Clear Channel Italy needed to migrate its AS/400 production workloads to Azure, ideally with minimal change and business disruption because its legacy system was running on aging hardware over a decade old and no longer supported by IBM.

Clear Channel Italy migrated its legacy AS/400 workloads to Skytap on Azure seamlessly and without business disruption, gaining peace of mind knowing that it is no longer at risk from continuing to run its legacy workloads on old, difficult to replace hardware.

Challenge

Clear Channel Europe, the business unit that Clear Channel Italy is part of, had adopted a cloud migration strategy to streamline operations and modernize IT infrastructure and applications across its 25 business units and had selected Microsoft Azure as its destination cloud. As part of this company-wide digital transformation, Clear Channel Italy was in the process of migrating its workloads to Azure.

As it began to assess on-premises workloads, one specific area of interest was a migration path for its IBM Power AS/400 system which ran a number of business critical applications and processes. The hardware for this legacy system was over a decade old, creating a growing concern related to the availability of obtaining replacement parts in the future should a repair be required. Likewise, the system's operating system version was no longer supported by IBM, putting the company at risk. Given these factors, Clear Channel Italy was interested in migrating its AS/400 production workloads to Azure and wanted to do so with minimal change and business disruption.

Overview

INDUSTRY: Outdoor Advertising

OBJECTIVE: Migrate legacy IBM Power workloads to Azure with minimal business disruption

USE CASE: Skytap on Azure for Production Workloads

IBM POWER: IBM i (AS/400)

About the Company

Clear Channel is a leading media company in the Out of Home sector present in 31 countries across Europe, Asia, North America and Latin America. Founded in 1999, the Clear Channel Italy business unit is based in Milan, Padua, Rome, Naples and Bari. Innovation and creativity are the cornerstones of its strategy which takes the form of the search for new types of advertising that go beyond the borders of "Out of Home." It currently owns and operates 1,500 digital screens throughout Italy.

Solution

The Microsoft Azure team actively supporting Clear Channel's cloud transformation recommended that Clear Channel Italy migrate its legacy AS/400 workloads to Skytap on Azure. Because Skytap on Azure is uniquely designed to run IBM Power workloads in Azure without extensive refactoring or replatforming, this would accelerate the company's migration path for its AS/400 workloads with minimal change and risk while allowing it to benefit from the global availability and scalability of Azure. Clear Channel worked closely with Microsoft and Skytap to properly plan for and execute a successful migration from on-premises to Skytap on Azure.

When asked how the new implementation went, Clear Channel Outdoor Senior Infrastructure Architect Claudio Levi refers to the migration as "a miracle," noting that the implementation went smoothly and appreciates what the Clear Channel team was able to achieve with minimal issues. This success was primarily due to thoughtful planning by Clear Channel as it spent weeks creating the new environment in Skytap on Azure, configuring the network and conducting preliminary IT testing.

After properly configuring the network and completing initial testing, Clear Channel was able to use Skytap on Azure's "clone to region" feature to activate the IBM Power system in its desired Azure region. Then, Clear Channel tuned the system, completed additional testing and began preparing for the final migration. Once testing and tuning were completed, Clear Channel successfully underwent the full migration without incident. Clear Channel's seamless implementation was further supported by its close partnership with Microsoft and Skytap.

> "All of the people who were involved on the Skytap side were very helpful with all of the items we needed assistance with."
>
> – Claudio Levi, Clear Channel Outdoor Senior Infrastructure Architect

Outcomes

"Thanks to our successful migration to Skytap on Azure, our IBM production workloads are now running flawlessly in Skytap," stated Levi. Clear Channel also gained peace of mind knowing that it is no longer at risk for business disruption that may have resulted from continuing to run its legacy AS/400 workloads on aging, difficult to replace hardware. It also took the opportunity to upgrade its IBM operating system from version 6.0 to 7.4.

Beyond these improvements, Clear Channel can now also leverage Skytap on Azure features such as "live clone" and templates to quickly create dev test and disaster recovery environments in the future.

In addition to its successful migration to Skytap on Azure, Clear Channel seized the migration as an opportunity to enhance its own understanding of what was running in the system—as is often the case with legacy systems, several of the current systems were developed and implemented many, many years prior by employees who no longer work at the company. This proved beneficial as the team was also able to improve its understanding of the applications and business processes supported by the system and resolve several issues identified during the migration process. Longer-term, Clear Channel Italy is now positioned to incrementally modernize as it may look to re-factor these business processes in other Azure platforms.

Learn more about how Skytap on Azure can support your organization's IBM Power migration efforts.

Skytap is a cloud service purpose-built to natively run traditional systems in the cloud. Our customers use Skytap for running production, disaster recovery, virtual training labs, and development workloads. We are the only cloud service to support AIX, IBM i, and Linux on IBM Power together with x86 workloads, enabling businesses to accelerate their journey to the cloud and increase innovation. To learn more about Skytap or schedule a demo, visit www.skytap.com .