

Thrifty, investing in a zero-downtime release process

Client profile

Thrifty Car & Van Rental UK has come a long way since it started.

Scot Group Ltd, who operate both the Dollar and Thrifty rental brands in the UK, is the largest privately owned rental company in the country.

Much of this success is attributed to their focus on delivering a superior customer experience, as well as their ability to provide B2B and B2C rental services.

Which technologies?

- Cloud computing

Which services?

- Managed Cloud Services
- Cloud Consulting Services

Which partners?

- AWS

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As part of Thrifty’s continued growth, updates to our mission-critical booking and rental systems were required. After strategic evaluations, we chose NTT to assist with the modernization of these systems.

Jason Harker, Director of IT, Thrifty

Summary

Thrifty Car & Van Rental UK experienced an increase in demand, driven by large B2B customer acquisitions. To handle this growth, Thrifty worked with NTT to assist with future-proofing core digital systems, defining a strategy and understanding the challenges of their current systems. We ran a series of cloud strategy workshops, which focused on what the replacement solutions would be. We were then able to scope and execute the software and application changes required, while implementing a zero-downtime release process and providing critical operational managed services. All of these updates combined ensured a continuous evolution, reliability and mission-critical system availability, allowing Thrifty to offer a superior quality of commercial and private rental services.



Business need

The challenge: zero-downtime

Throughout their more than 40 year history, Scot Group has maintained a strategic expansion plan. The challenge presented to Thrifty, as part of this strategy, reached a tipping point in 2017 when they experienced a surge in rental demand driven by large B2B customer acquisitions. This growth allowed them to make further investments in their IT environment to ensure that the core digital systems for rental and corporate bookings could cater for current and projected demand.

These systems are the cornerstone of Thrifty's operations. As they experience variable loads based on bookings volume they had been deployed to AWS by Thrifty's internal teams to take advantage of the on-demand, scalable functionality that comes with public cloud. In addition, these systems are highly secure due to the transaction of rental bookings and any modernization had to ensure continued PCI-DSS compliance.

With the strategy defined and challenges clearly understood, several initiatives were started by Thrifty as part of its IT investment:

- ensure operational reliability and overall service availability
- support application modernization
- ensure technology innovation
- ensure the maximum security of the service and customer data

Solution

The cloud transformation

In reviewing their core IT initiatives, Thrifty made a strategic decision to bolster its capability through a cloud managed service provider model. Through a series of cloud strategy workshops, they identified NTT as being able to provide the optimal blend of operational and technology transformation experience. Storage Solution (Amazon S3), was a key differentiator for their transition from on-premises to the cloud.

Following our Cloud Transformation Framework, the first sprint of work was to deploy and modernize a greenfield replacement of the core rental and booking systems. The software was updated, providing greater governance and architecture adherence.

This, combined with infrastructure as code definition and a new blue/green application release management strategy, integrated smoothly into the Thrifty code pipeline.

This replacement solution was built using a combination of native AWS IaaS and PaaS services to achieve immediate PCI-DSS re-certification. This helped overcome many security complexities often experienced in traditional on-premises environments.

The final, rigorous testing, acceptance, and go-live were executed seamlessly with zero downtime or impact on customers.

Outcomes

Faster release processes

NTT's experience and cloud automation products were successfully integrated into the Thrifty application development process to support a much faster release process with zero-downtime.

As well as a 20% reduction in AWS costs, the client has seen a 12-fold increase in application releases, moving from once per quarter to many per week.

All of this is underpinned by a service governance framework that provides operational responsibility, transparency while supporting tactical and strategic change.



NTT helped identify optimizations with both the software/application and infrastructure architecture on AWS, execute the deployment, migration and provide a 24/7 managed service all while ensuring our PCI-DSS certification was not jeopardized.

Jason Harker, Director of IT, Thrifty