




Fitness First

Case Study



Developing a standardised, automated software delivery process to speed deployment and reduce both cost and risk

The Client

Fitness First is the largest chain of private gyms in the world, with around 360 fitness clubs across 16 countries and approximately a million members. Its philosophy is to keep members motivated with the best equipment, a range of classes, knowledgeable staff and professional advice in a welcoming environment.



At A Glance

Fitness First's legacy infrastructure made it extremely complex and time-consuming to develop and deploy new software, directly affecting staff productivity and the experience of its members. It needed to introduce a standardised infrastructure to make delivery faster, reduce errors, and cut both costs and risk.

DevOpsGroup delivered on that requirement with transparent, consistent and simplified processes and infrastructure, with industry-leading tools to boost visibility and automation.

The results have been dramatic. Cost savings in many areas have been significant, such as supporting an 85% reduction in co-location expenses. Fitness First now has an entirely coherent, efficient and streamlined DevOps environment, which reduces the risk of rolling out new code and cuts the time involved in developing, deploying and maintaining software. This is helping deliver Fitness First's hosting strategy of efficiency, simplicity and cost effectiveness.



The Challenge

Fitness First is a global leader in a highly competitive sector, and many of its gyms are open 24/7, every day of the year. In this environment, IT downtime caused by error-ridden code can cause huge problems for the business – if a gym cannot sign up a new member because the systems aren't operational, for example, the customer can go elsewhere.

The company's European and global based applications and services were hosted in Amsterdam. This used a complex mix of legacy hardware, operating systems and databases. This legacy environment brought a common issue of a lack of standardisation for managing environments and software deployment from development to production.

This meant that the development and delivery of new software was slow, prone to errors, time-consuming and costly. Fitness First needed a new infrastructure that would deliver this consistency across the IT estate, speed up the delivery process, reduce IT costs and cut down on errors.

The Solution

Fitness First selected DevOpsGroup after short-listing two providers.

"What really attracted us to DevOpsGroup was their working relationships with key vendors," said Jon Forster, Data Centre Migration Global Programme Manager for Fitness First. "If companies like Redgate and AppDynamics trust DevOpsGroup, then we were prepared to as well. DevOpsGroup were also extremely honest about their areas of expertise, if there was something they couldn't do, they'd help you find someone else to do it. They would always own the problem". "They focus first and foremost on the project's end point."

DevOpsGroup began by reviewing the current pipeline process for managing code, the environments and the database, and moving code through each stage from concept to deployment. DevOpsGroup then produced a proof of concept that transformed the software delivery process with an industry-leading toolset, services and practices which offered a modernised, simplified and transparent solution.



"We needed an expert to tell us how to get to where we wanted to be, and they absolutely did that without scope creep or trying to change the project objectives."

Jon Forster, Consultant Data Centre Migration Global Programme Manager





As part of the wider project, Fitness First had brought in hyperconverged infrastructure provider Nutanix to move the whole infrastructure to an industry leading architecture. DevOpsGroup collaborated closely with Nutanix to make sure the new infrastructure fulfilled Fitness First's software delivery needs.

Microsoft Azure was also introduced as an integral part of Fitness First's disaster recovery strategy, to replace the previous tape-based back-ups and to provide a much higher level of flexibility and agility. In addition, Microsoft Azure Stack allowed Fitness First to take advantage of Azure's increased power on-premise in the new, scaled-down data centre facilities as well as in the cloud. Octopus Deploy and Redgate tooling were also brought in to allow far greater automation.

UK and global apps have now been migrated to the new platform over a very short timeframe.

The Benefits

Speed of Deployment, Flexibility & Automation

Developing and deploying code is now significantly faster and vastly more efficient. This has freed up team resource to focus on higher-value activities such as improving the customer experience.

Automated processes mean staff are only required to make a few mouse clicks to deploy updates and new code after testing. Building a whole environment automatically takes 20 minutes, compared to around a day with the old manual process.

The use of Microsoft Azure provides a much higher level of flexibility, with additional compute and storage resources available at short notice as the business needs them.

Cost Reduction

Fitness First has seen some dramatic cost savings as a result of the new infrastructure, tools and processes:

- 85% reduction in co-location cost, as the number of racks were reduced from twenty to two
- 65% reduction in data centre support and maintenance expenses
- SAN maintenance costs have been reduced to zero
- Back-ups through Microsoft Azure have reduced complexity, cut costs and brought in far greater simplicity

Standardisation

All parts of the DevOps environment, including the database, are now managed under source control. That means it is quick and simple to copy the database into a new environment, which was extremely difficult and time-consuming before.

The use of Microsoft Azure Stack means that there is consistency across all elements of the infrastructure, whether Fitness First is using resources in its own data centre facilities or in the cloud.

As a result, Fitness First has absolute confidence that all environments are identical, so testing is predictable and the risk of deploying new code is significantly reduced.

Visibility

Fitness First now has total visibility of its DevOps process and which version of the application is in each of the environments (development, testing, user acceptance, pre-production and production).

Using AppDynamics, the company has access to unprecedented granularity of performance across every area of their systems. "Within the first five days it was invaluable in resolving an error," says Jon Forster. "One service started to run extremely slowly, but we were able to identify the problem and resolve it in minutes, when previously it could have taken days."

The End Point

Fitness First now has a streamlined, standardised and transparent infrastructure with the systems, tools and processes it needs to boost efficiency and save money.

Greater visibility and consistency has hugely cut risk and slashed the time needed for development, deployment and management of code. This gives the company the time and ability to develop innovative services and focus on providing greater customer satisfaction.

About DevOpsGroup

DevOpsGroup enables High-Performance IT by combining modern cloud platforms with DevOps practices.

We help enterprises to engineer modern cloud infrastructures, accelerate their transitions to DevOps ways-of-working, and upskill their teams to become future-ready High-Performance IT practitioners and leaders.

Over the years, we've worked with more than 80 clients across a plethora of markets and sectors - including household names such as Admiral, Vodafone, BAE Systems, the DVLA and Waitrose.

If you'd like to discuss how we can accelerate your digital transformation journey, contact us on **0800 368 7378** or team@devopsgroup.com.

To read more on DevOps, Digital Transformation, and how we partner with our clients to aid their DevOps journey, visit our website www.devopsgroup.com and our blog www.devopsgroup.com/blog

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0800 368 7378



team@devopsgroup.com



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