ACS Technologies Eases Cloud Migration Challenges with GO-Global

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About ACS Technologies

Founded in 1978, ACS Technologies provides a comprehensive set of church ministry software and service solutions to nearly 50,000 churches, schools, and organizational offices. Located in Florence, SC, with remote employees across the U.S., ACS Technologies' ministry development tools are designed with a 'whole church' approach to meet the unique needs of pastors, staff members, and congregants, enabling them to spend less time managing data and finances and more time on ministry. For more information, visit **acstechnologies.com**.

The Challenge

ACS Technologies' Windows-based flagship church management software product line, which included ACS for Windows™, Parish Data System™, and HeadMaster™, was at one time sold to customers on CD and via download for use on on-premises PCs.

ACS Technologies customers operating with and without IT staff faced similar challenges when using ACS software. Church staff had to install and update the software and back up and secure the software database, which was time-consuming and intimidating for non-technical users. Technical staff members were undaunted by those software and data maintenance tasks but preferred working on other IT-related issues.

As one IT director using ACS Technologies software observed, "The truth is, there's only so many hours in the day, and there's plenty of other fires to put out."

Challenges

- **Move on-premises software to the cloud without a rewrite**
- **Stay competitive with cloud-based solutions**
- **Control cost and complexity**
- **Reduce helpdesk calls**

Solution

- **GraphOn GO-Global**

Results

- **Easy migration to the cloud**
- **Reduced infrastructure complexity**
- **Reduced helpdesk calls**
- **Extended product lifespan**

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The Challenge *(continued)*

And, since the software was installed and maintained locally, ACS Technologies customers' ability to leverage their software investment was limited since they had to be in the church office to use the software.

Additionally, since every church's IT system setup is different, for ACS Technologies, the challenge of supporting the software on a myriad of PCs, networks, and printers escalated as sales grew. In January, when churches close their books for the previous year, customers could be on hold with technical support for 45 minutes or more—even though ACS Technologies traditionally expanded support hours and worked through weekends to accommodate the high demand.

As ACS Technologies assessed how to address these customer challenges, the company began to see their competitors entering the church software market with SaaS solutions that were platform independent, updated automatically, and usable from anywhere. ACS Technologies' management team realized that their on-premises solution needed to move to the cloud to eliminate their customer's usability challenges, reduce the burden on their helpdesk, and allow the company to retain their market share.

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>
> **— STACY KENNEDY,**
>   **IT Systems Architect**
>   **ACS Technologies**

The Solution: GO-Global

But how should ACS Technologies move to the cloud? The company had two choices: rewrite the software, or find a solution to enable the existing applications to be accessed from the cloud. Customers loved ACS' rich feature set, and management knew that it would take at least 5 years to deliver a cloud-based product with a significant fraction of that functionality. And the company wanted to move quickly to stave off competition from cloud-native software companies.

Ultimately, the team decided to take a two-pronged approach; find an application publishing solution that would enable them to move their flagship solutions to the cloud, which would allow them to build a cloud-native alternative over time.

So, ACS Technologies IT team, led by Stacy Kennedy, IT Systems Architect, began the search for an application publishing solution. Their priorities were 1) ease of use for customers, 2) ease of use for ACS Technologies, and 3) overall cost. After researching all possible approaches, the choice came down to Microsoft® Remote Desktop Services (RDS), Citrix® XenApp, and GraphOn® GO-Global®.

After a few months of testing, ACS Technologies chose GO-Global. Stacy Kennedy described their findings and decision this way: "GO-Global won because it's easy to configure, scalability was great, and it was very easy to migrate our application to GO-Global. RDS did not meet our scalability needs, and the CALS licenses required to run our software on RDS were cost prohibitive. GO-Global doesn't run on RDS, so in addition to ease of use, we avoided paying for CALs licenses."

Stacy continued, "Citrix was too complex for our needs, and it was difficult for our users to use. Users thought that logging in and using the application with Citrix took too long. GO-Global makes it very simple and fast for users to log in and start using the application. That was a big plus for us. We also loved how easy it was for users to print documents using GO-Global."

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The Results

When GO-Global was implemented, the resulting cloud-based offerings were designated with "OnDemand". ACS Technologies rolled out the OnDemand line in phases, first to their largest customers, then via their helpdesk, who would promote OnDemand to customers calling for product support. OnDemand adoption accelerated quickly due to enthusiastic word of mouth.

Five years after the OnDemand rollout began, ACS Technologies introduced Realm, a cloud-native application that provided roughly 20% of the OnDemand product line's feature set. However, 10 years later, even though Realm provides 80% of OnDemand features, 9,000 organizations with over 45K users still use OnDemand due to its rich functionality and familiar interface.

Said Stacy, "In addition to OnDemand, we are now using GO-Global to help our partners SaaS-ify their applications on our infrastructure. What surprises them is how easy GO-Global makes it to transition from the legacy desktop to the cloud."

Stacy added, "We'll continue to offer OnDemand and GO-Global as long as our customers want to use it. GO-Global is doing exactly what we want it to do. It's made our users more productive, significantly reduced our helpdesk calls, and made us more competitive."

About GraphOn

GraphOn created GO-Global to enable organizations to publish Windows® applications from any public, private, or hybrid cloud, to any device that supports a browser. Using GO-Global, IT can deliver Windows applications at up to 40% less than Microsoft® RDS and up to 70% less that VDI solutions from Citrix® and VMware®. Despite its low cost, GO-Global delivers enterprise-level scalability but is easy to install, configure, and use, with considerably less technology overhead required for implementation. For more information, visit **www.graphon.com**.

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