



Cloud Power



IT Firm Uses Cloud Solution to Streamline Reporting for U.S. Government Contractors

Partner: Hitachi Consulting

Web Site: www.hitachiconsulting.com

Partner Size: 5,000 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—IT services

Partner Profile

Hitachi Consulting, the global business and IT consulting company of Hitachi Ltd., provides business and technology solutions for a broad range of industries. It is based in Dallas, Texas.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Cloud Services
 - Windows Azure
 - Microsoft SQL Azure

To view the full story of Hitachi Consulting and other success stories, visit the Microsoft Success Web site at: www.microsoft.com/business/success/

For more information about Microsoft Cloud Services, go to: www.microsoft.com/cloud

“Accurate, timely reporting is a mission-critical priority for the Aerospace and Defense contractors we partner with. Microsoft SQL Azure is helping us address this important business need.”

David McGlone, Senior Vice President of Consulting Services, Hitachi Consulting

Accurate reporting is a mission-critical task for system integrators working on major U.S. government programs. To streamline reporting, [Hitachi Consulting](#) combined the Microsoft [SQL Azure](#) cloud database service with Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 to create its Program Management Framework. The solution helps companies move data to the cloud for internal and external reporting purposes, speeding access to vital information while reducing costs.

Business Needs

Major U.S. government programs are typically large and complex, supporting huge swaths of industrial activity and keeping private-sector companies busy for years—and, along the way, providing plenty of business challenges. [Hitachi Consulting](#), the global IT and business consulting company of Hitachi Ltd., delivers services and solutions that help companies manage massive amounts of information generated by multi-year federal programs often worth many billions of dollars.

Aerospace and Defense is a key segment for Hitachi Consulting. Its largest clients are system integrators, or SIs, which are capable of bidding on and managing federal government projects of immense scope. These companies, in turn, subcontract with hundreds of smaller “Tier 2” organizations that provide expertise and supplies, such as engineering services, jet rotors, and other sub-assembly deliverables. Federal contracts require all of these organizations to adhere to strict reporting guidelines. When working with

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the major SIs, Hitachi Consulting designs and deploys custom program management systems to handle their immense reporting tasks. The Tier 2 companies, though, face extra challenges.

"The Tier 2 suppliers have similar business needs, but custom systems are often too costly and resource-intensive for their organizations," says David McGlone, Senior Vice President of Consulting Services for the Hitachi Consulting Aerospace and Defense Practice. The result can be missed reporting deadlines and substandard report quality, which can lead to lost opportunities for revenue."

Solution

Hitachi Consulting, a [Microsoft Gold Certified Alliance Partner](#), tackled the challenge of helping Tier 2 companies by creating a hybrid solution, called the Program Management Framework, that uses Microsoft on-premises and cloud technologies, including Windows Azure.

The solution allows Hitachi Consulting to deliver scalable program management features such as streamlined reporting, collaboration, and automated order processing. It combines the best information-sharing and collaborative capabilities of an on-premises Microsoft SharePoint 2010 installation with Microsoft [SQL Azure](#), a relational cloud database service. The solution also uses SQL Azure Reporting Services, a cloud service based on Microsoft SQL Server 2008 R2 Reporting Services and SQL Azure.

The solution takes advantage of multiple enterprise data sources to retrieve program data, and then populates that data into a

database within SQL Azure. The data source depends on the customer's IT infrastructure and business processes, and may include on-premises SQL Server databases, Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, enterprise resource systems, and financial systems. Microsoft SharePoint 2010 is used for sharing and viewing data through tools such as dashboards.

Hitachi Consulting began work on the SQL Azure components in March 2011 and finalized development in May 2011. The company also developed a path for clients to follow for moving their reporting processes to the cloud.

Benefits

The Program Management Framework supports fast, efficient reporting in a streamlined manner. With improved compliance, companies can benefit from performance awards and increased revenues. The framework can also help reduce the costs and overhead of managing on-premises IT systems. "Accurate, timely reporting is a mission-critical priority for Aerospace and Defense contractors we partner with," says McGlone. "Microsoft SQL Azure is helping us address this important business need."

Reports Produced Up to 75 Percent Faster

Hitachi Consulting estimates that with reporting data stored on SQL Azure, where it is easier to access, SIs and their suppliers can reduce report production time by 50 percent or more. "One of our larger customers has three employees whose full-time job is generating reports, a process that takes an average of two to three weeks for each report," says Rob Rae,

Director of the Microsoft Platform Practice for Hitachi Consulting. "By moving data to a simplified environment with SQL Azure, we expect that the average client will cut that time to about one week."

Increased Prospects for Awards—and Profitability

Performance awards are important incentives in government project work. With SQL Azure, which provides more efficient reporting and a more robust program management solution, Tier 2 companies should expect to see an increase in awards. "Our conservative estimates are that Tier 2 suppliers can anticipate an increase in award fees of at least 5 to 10 percent," says Rae. "That improves profitability and enhances a company's reputation in future business negotiations."

Annual IT Costs Reduced an Average of \$200,000

Moving their reporting systems to SQL Azure can help organizations reduce the costs and administrative overhead of traditional on-premises systems while providing a cost-effective platform that can support constant fluctuations in program activity. "A typical organization might require six or eight servers, storage hardware, and a complex disaster-recovery infrastructure to manage its reporting activities," says Rae. "With SQL Azure and our solution, we anticipate that a typical client will save at least \$200,000 annually in hardware and licensing costs alone. Plus, the reduced administrative burden of SQL Azure and Windows Azure will allow our clients to refocus scarce technical resources on higher value activities."