Motor Oil Powers Its Own Transformation

Motor Oil is a EUR 10 billion energy business based in Greece with operations worldwide. The group comprises 82 operating companies.

Industry
Energy

Strategic priorities
- Multi-Cloud

VMware footprint
- VMware® vSphere®
- Azure VMware Solution

Established in 1972, Motor Oil has a 50-year history in oil refining and petroleum product development and marketing in Greece and the Southeastern Mediterranean. Though its traditional focus is the petroleum sector, the company plans to expand into renewable and new forms of cleaner energy. To pivot to new solutions and business models, Motor Oil needed to adopt digital-forward and agile ways of working. Using Azure VMware Solution, Motor Oil can scale new projects and onboard new partners quickly, establishing an environment where cloud can support the most innovative applications.

Powering the transition from oil to renewable energy

Climate change, the dangers posed by fossil fuel emissions, and the arrival of viable, renewable alternatives are shaking old certainties in the energy market. Motor Oil recognized that its survival in this rapidly changing sector depended on it being at the forefront of waste-to-energy, charge point services for electric vehicles and battery storage technology. To pursue new opportunities, the EUR 10 billion business needed to become more flexible across its legacy business to create the agility to pursue new opportunities, from home grown innovation to start-up acquisition. Motor Oil also needed to work with new partners, many of them outside the energy sector.

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Vasilis Anastasiou, Group IT Director, Operations and Infrastructure, Motor Oil

Greater IT agility powers business innovation

A new type of business—one that needs to scale, move quickly and absorb new acquisitions—requires a new approach to IT. "We need to grow and shrink our IT environment as required. We need automation, templates, and consistency in our processes," says Vasilis Anastasiou, group IT director, operations and infrastructure at Motor Oil.

These requirements make the perfect case for a multi-cloud solution. Shifting to renewables is pioneering territory, and Motor Oil must work as fast as any global start-up; recognizing that cloud can provide group-wide consistency, uniting the company's 82 different operating entities. Cloud can help scale and support the launch of standard tools and provide the capacity to accommodate sudden spikes in demand. "Cloud allows elasticity," Anastasiou says. "It creates standardization and helps us keep the lights on."

Anastasiou cannot rule out a hybrid approach in the future, but for now Azure is the company's cloud provider of choice: "We have a strategic partnership with Microsoft. We will need to keep certain workloads on-premises for now, but where there is a sensible business case for moving to the cloud we will do so. Azure VMware Solution was the obvious choice, as it provided lots of out-of-the-box functionality."

If the move to cloud and the partnership with Microsoft were sensible choices, Anastasiou knew the biggest challenge would be the migration. Motor Oil didn't want to tie up internal resources, nor hand all responsibility to a third party. The group wanted to move quickly yet appreciated the long-term value of proper advance planning.

Migration minus application refactoring

Azure VMware Solution provides Motor Oil with a fully consistent VMware infrastructure deployed as an Azure service to support its VMware workloads. Because Motor Oil is a long-time VMware user the company can skip refactoring applications, saving time and expense.

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The Motor Oil implementation was the first large-scale use of Azure VMware Solution in the region. Anastasiou says he was comfortable being an early adopter of the technology but help from the Professional Services teams at VMware and Microsoft was crucial. "We worked with their fast-track teams, from proof of concept through to migration. The pilot was instructive. It allowed us to fine-tune the infrastructure regarding high availability, disaster recovery and quality assurance."

These sentiments are echoed by the Microsoft team. "We feel privileged to work with Motor Oil to open new paths to amplify its technology investments," says Nadine Karali, commercial director, SMC Greece, Cyprus and Malta at Microsoft. "With Microsoft Azure VMware Solution, Motor Oil continues to use established, trusted tools while increasing digital capacity to stay ahead of the competition." This hybrid cloud approach, made possible by a longstanding partnership between Microsoft and VMware, forms the core of a strategy to empower businesses by meeting them where they are on their cloud journey.

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The solution means Motor Oil can deploy VMware infrastructure from the Azure Portal and automate tasks to create and monitor vSphere virtual machines using the VMware APIs.

Being able to work with familiar VMware tools may appear to be a simple benefit, says Anastasiou, but it creates a multiplier effect. "We're not wasting time learning new toolsets. When the business is focused on innovation and moving quickly, these savings matter. We're now much more focused on continuous improvement and finding ways to support the business."

This change of culture helps Anastasiou invigorate his existing team and will make Motor Oil a more attractive employer for new talent. "Motor Oil is undergoing a transformation. The company knows it needs new ideas and new collaborations," he says.

Cloud migration helps fuel industry transformation

The cloud project delivers scale and flexibility, minimizing major disruptions to the day-to-day business. It provides the capacity and elasticity demanded by a company with operations in eight countries and nearly 3,000 employees.

This capacity and elasticity have already been used to support recent acquisitions. Anastasiou's team onboarded a chain of 25 fuel stations in Croatia in less than three months. This streamlined process created a template for future acquisitions Anastasiou expects will drop further to just four weeks from three months.

"We want to create templates for other scenarios. It could be fuel stations; it could be wind farms or solar parks," he says. "The business will see that IT can help accelerate how we take on new opportunities."

Motor Oil wants to expand its international network of fuel stations and sees an opportunity to reimagine new purposes for them as drivers embrace electric vehicles. Fuel stations will become charging points where drivers linger longer. This may transform them into places to eat, shop, work or bank. The commercial possibilities offered by these new venues will almost certainly require Motor Oil to work with a new set of partners, and cloud solutions will empower the business to move quickly on this project.

"We have a template in place for the fuel station of the future, with all the networking and security needed to support a rapid rollout," he says.

Azure VMware Solution allows Motor Oil to view and create VMware vSphere virtual machines in the Azure portal via API calls or CLI, automate deployments and enable single sign-on (SSO) and integrate its VMware environment with Azure.

Reducing IT uncertainty to accelerate business opportunity

Transformation is not a "before and after" concept, says Anastasiou. It is ongoing. What constitutes agility today may be slow and cumbersome in the future. The pressure to find new opportunities in rapidly evolving markets will be relentless.

The engagement with VMware helps Motor Oil remove uncertainty around core IT operations, while providing the company with the freedom to pursue new ideas. During times of rapid change these flexible solutions establish much-needed continuity, creating an IT environment better able to cope with whatever the business demands.

"VMware brings us the things we need most: speed and simplicity," he says.

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