



## Case Study

### SNW Asset Management

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## Case Study Highlights

Country: United States | Industry: Financial / Investment | More Info: <http://www.snwam.com>



### Business Situation:

Move a spin-off company to a new IT infrastructure in just six weeks.

### Overview:

SNW Asset Management is an independent registered investment advisor providing active fixed income portfolio management, with over \$2 billion under management in taxable and tax-exempt accounts for high net worth individuals, municipalities, corporations, credit unions, foundations and registered investment advisors. The company has offices in Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon.

### Solution:

A hybrid cloud model powered by the OS33 platform for hosting applications and managing user access.

On-site and implementation services from Key Methods, an OS33 Certified Delivery Partner.

### Results:

- Reduced capital expense
- Migration in a weekend with zero downtime
- Smooth integration of new applications
- Simplicity for users
- Scalable infrastructure for future business growth

## Building a Complete IT Infrastructure from Scratch

An acquisition of its parent company led to an employee buyout of SNW Asset Management in Summer 2013. This change in ownership meant moving SNW to a completely new office space and IT infrastructure—in just six weeks.

“We knew we couldn’t build an IT infrastructure ourselves in that short timeframe, so we started researching hosted services,” says Andrew Ferencz, Chief Technology and Operations Officer for SNW. “We were also concerned about migrating our legacy applications for portfolio management and trading, which include both vendor systems and our own proprietary applications.”

In addition to the short timeframe, the migration project faced other challenges. The new office space needed to be ready in time, with correct installation of wiring, a new phone system and other on-premises hardware; the new Internet service also needed to be operational. And, SNW wanted to integrate a new order management system, upgrade its portfolio accounting system and implement new compliance software tools at the same time.

One thing that wasn’t new in this scenario? The employee PCs, which they were allowed to take with them from the parent company.

### SNW considered three different models for the new computing infrastructure:

- 1 A traditional, on-premises solution, where all servers and applications would be implemented and maintained at the SNW offices. This model was rejected because of the tight migration schedule and limited capabilities.
- 2 An all-cloud solution, where all servers and applications would be hosted with only remote access. There was support for this model, but also concerns about productivity and performance impacts, especially when employees needed to access complex spreadsheets and files.
- 3 A hybrid solution that would offer all the benefits of the cloud with synchronization of file data to servers in the SNW office. This model would enable seamless use of productivity applications by employees in the office without a learning curve. Cloud-based applications would benefit from seamless integration with the company’s trading terminals, large spreadsheets and other locally stored files.

## Why External IT, OS33 and Key Methods?

Ferencz chose External IT based on the recommendation of an SNW partner company, which was using OS33 hosted services for their own trading platform. He notes, “We also did our own due diligence and it became evident very quickly that External IT has expertise in the financial industry and could work well with our external application vendors.”

On-site deployment of SNW’s file servers and connectivity to the OS33 service was performed by Key Methods, an OS33 Certified Delivery Partner located in Washington state. Key Methods also provides ongoing support to SNW for issues such as performance of the file server and local applications and changing user configurations.

“My expectations for the migration process were absolutely met,” says Ferencz. “OS33 and Key Methods took a very diligent and comprehensive approach to managing our project. OS33 also had the technical and project management depth to handle all of the unknown factors and be responsive to surprises that came up during the migration.”

## A Proven Migration Process

OS33 uses an in-depth and refined-by-experience process to plan a migration from in-house systems to cloud services. Working as a team with the customer and the delivery partner, the OS33 process includes ten phases, as shown in Table 2.

Migration Phases	Description
1-4: Planning	Determining the project scope, launching the migration team and performing an in-depth discovery and analysis of the customer’s current environment. Planning and scheduling all activities for the migration project.
5-8: Implementation	Ordering and provisioning equipment for the customer locations and the OS33 data center. Testing and training for local equipment and applications. Performing the actual migration and validating the “go live” new service launch.
9-10: Review	Delivering post-migration assistance as needed and conducting a project analysis and review.

OS33 was responsible for planning the hosting design. Key Methods was responsible for advising SNW about site preparation, then performing the onsite server deployment, setup and configuration, as well as data and email migration activities.

A well-structured process is especially beneficial for short-timeframe projects such as the SNW migration. Only two weeks were available for the discovery and planning processes. For the migration itself, the change in company ownership occurred after close of business on a Friday and SNW needed to be fully operational as a new company on the following Monday morning.

Leveraging the OS33 Cloud platform, Key Methods was able to initiate deployment and begin preparing resources almost immediately after the contract was signed. User accounts, applications and file resources were pre-configured and immediately released to SNW for testing and validation before the cutover date.

SNW employees involved in the migration were able to test all core resources and gain experience with the hosted systems so they were comfortable and prepared for their new environment. With a solid, cloud-based deployment that was fully tested before going live, the team was certain the SNW environment would be operational and employees could be productive on their first day of business.

This preparation also meant the cutover weekend was spent simply doing final updates to email, files and databases for current data instead of hoping that all prerequisites would come together in just a 48-hour cutover window.

Because of regulatory constraints, the need for any migration assistance from the previous parent company was a concern for Ferencz. “With the planning done by OS33 and Key Methods, we were able to do the migration without any involvement of the parent company’s IT staff,” he says.

## A Cost-Effective IT Infrastructure, Ready at the Opening

The weekend migration went smoothly, so much so the service activation that could have been used as a test was kept on as the operational service for SNW’s first day of business on Monday. SNW has also realized other benefits from its new IT as a Service (ITaaS) deployment.

### Migration in a weekend with zero downtime.

This result was critical for SNW. “If we had experienced issues with getting any of our key applications fully migrated or the new applications integrated, we wouldn’t have been able to get through our first day,” says Ferencz

### Reduced capital expense.

Building an in-house IT infrastructure and support team would have required a large capital investment. By using a hosted service, the initial capital expense for SNW was less than 10 percent of the estimated cost for building its own infrastructure. With less on-premises equipment and no dependency on local server hardware, SNW’s operational and support expenses are also lower.

### Smooth integration of new applications.

In parallel with the migration of legacy applications, Key Methods worked with external vendors to integrate the new order management and portfolio accounting systems on OS33 that SNW would need to open its business. These integrations were completed without any issues.

### Simplicity for users.

SNW employees have easy access to all applications and files they need to do their work, whether they are at home, on the road or in the office. They can log-in to the OS33 Webtop through a browser, which is simpler than learning how to use virtual private network (VPN) client software. Employees are also able to leverage single signon to access local and hosted resources—even SaaS applications.

## Lessons Learned

Drawing from his experience with the SNW project, Ferencz offers several recommendations for other companies considering a migration to hybrid cloud services.

- Take a close look at what you have and document it well. “The last thing you want is any surprises when you have to introduce something that you’ve newly discovered in midstream,” he says. “If what you have is clearly communicated, then you can have confidence that building a parallel infrastructure and doing the migration will go well.”
- Understand the various needs of your users and which user licenses you will need to migrate. Also identify which licenses are not being used so they won’t be migrated.
- If users are accustomed to onsite IT support, offer training on how to submit online trouble tickets and work with an external support vendor.
- When implementing a hybrid cloud model, it is valuable to have a local resource for supporting users, equipment and systems on-site.

## Future Plans: More Cloud Services to Support Business Growth

As the company grows, Ferencz expects to expand the use of cloud-based IT services. SNW Asset Management wants the ability to add other offices without building a physical IT infrastructure. Also important is giving new employees easy access to the company’s IT environment immediately when they begin work.

Based in part on the success of the OS33 migration, “We want to move even more applications to cloud and vendor-based solutions instead of developing our own because this will allow us to scale and simplify our business operations,” says Ferencz.

### About External IT and OS33

External IT was one of the very first full-service, cloud IT outsourcing companies and is the developer of the OS33 platform.

OS33 is the leading unified cloud computing IT solution for delivering cloud desktops, applications and infrastructure all from a single solution. The OS33 platform has been tested and proven by thousands of end users across four continents.

With OS33, companies can rapidly provision users, companies and entire cloud-based IT networks that are easily accessible from any web-enabled device. For more information visit <http://www.os33.com> or <http://www.externalit.com>.

### About Key Methods?

Key Methods specializes in delivering IT solutions to small and mid-size businesses. An early adopter of cloud solutions, Key Methods has years of experience delivering the best cloud-based IT solutions for their clients.

Key Methods partners with companies to help them become more efficient, productive and satisfied with their technology investments. Headquartered out of Wenatchee, Washington, Key Methods provides services to a wide range of clients across Washington State.

For more information on Key Methods, visit [www.keymethods.net](http://www.keymethods.net) or call 888-860-2074.

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