MIGRATING JDA TO THE CLOUD

By Vince Vasquez

WITH BURSTORM'S HELP JDA DEPLOYS ITS PRIVATE CLOUD AT LAYERED TECH

It was March of 2009, Joe King's first day running JDA's Managed Services business. As he stared at his calendar, which no doubt would be empty for the last time, he reflected on the daunting task before him. While JDA Managed Services had begun in 1999, bringing Joe King on board was the beginning of a major investment by JDA in this new business model. Joe was a key part of the creation of the Oracle On Demand business and many of those skills were precisely what JDA needed.

Joseph King, VP Managed Services for JDA, discusses JDA's customers move to an on-demand solution.

In parallel, JDA, the leading supply chain solutions company with more than 6,000 customers worldwide, had grown organically and through acquisition. In the past 20 years, JDA had acquired a number of companies such as I2 (2010), Manugistics (2006), E3 (2001), Intactix (2000) and Arthur (1998).

With these acquisitions came a number of disparate hardware and software environments. For instance, the software acquired from Manugistics ran on IBM AS/400 and I-Series gear, while other applications ran on about 2,000 deployed Dell boxes. On the software stack was a mix of Microsoft and Linux, as well as different versions of Oracle and WebLogic. To make management of these environments even more challenging, the various applications were running out of six different data centers spread around the globe.

Joe's mandate was clear: His team had to deliver a platform that brought stability to the operating environment. They had to harness technology like cloud computing where it made sense, but also limit the amount of technology so they didn't become overburdened by it. The team had to continue to deliver strong availability and application performance, while also addressing customers' security concerns. With more than 1 million users accessing JDA systems from 193 countries, downtime could not be an issue. And all this had to be achieved while supporting JDA's continued growth.

Joe and his team decided to bring all the on-demand customers into one data center, but buying or building a facility didn't make sense. The challenge was to choose a cloud, hosting supplier that could deliver on JDA's many requirements. However, before choosing someone, Joe needed a specialist to help him and his team to navigate the hundreds of potential players and products.

AN UNBIASED SPECIALIST

When Joe and his team made the decision to move to a single facility, they needed a partner to help them evaluate all the different technology platforms and the multitude of hosting relationships, everything from communications to hardware to software. After all, Joe's team was already running the day-to-day business, with limited free cycles available to devote to such a large endeavor. In addition, the team had limited expertise in this area and needed help in developing a robust set of requirements and vetting potential vendors.

For starters, this specialist needed to know not only all the potential suppliers in the marketplace, but also the reality behind what these players could truly deliver. This meant understanding the hardware, software and networking needed to tie all the users together, along with the ongoing technology to manage it.

And all of it was happening on a tight time line. Joe wanted to make the hosting partner decision in three months, begin the data center migration in another three months, and go live within an eight-month period.

Most important, however, Joe needed an unbiased advisor, someone who could be a sounding board and not push his team in any specific direction. JDA needed to evaluate each candidate on its own merits.

Joe found this specialist in Brandon Abbey, CEO of Burstorm, and his team. As Joe puts it: "They were a sage advisor, someone we could trust, someone who didn't seem to want to push us in certain directions."

Joseph King discusses JDA's decision process to move its private cloud to Layered Tech's Cloud

REQUIREMENTS TO SELECTION

The first step in the selection process was to create an RFP with a detailed set of requirements. To achieve this, the Burstorm team augmented JDA's initial requirements with a richer set of pertinent questions.

The Burstorm team then sent the requirements to 15 potential suppliers, all carefully selected because Burstorm knew from experience that those companies had the potential to meet JDA's needs. Upon receiving the responses, the Burstorm team normalized the responses so that JDA could compare apples to apples.

A further filtering process netted three finalists. Ultimately, Joe and his team picked Layered Tech as their cloud, hosting partner.

AN ACQUISITION WRINKLE

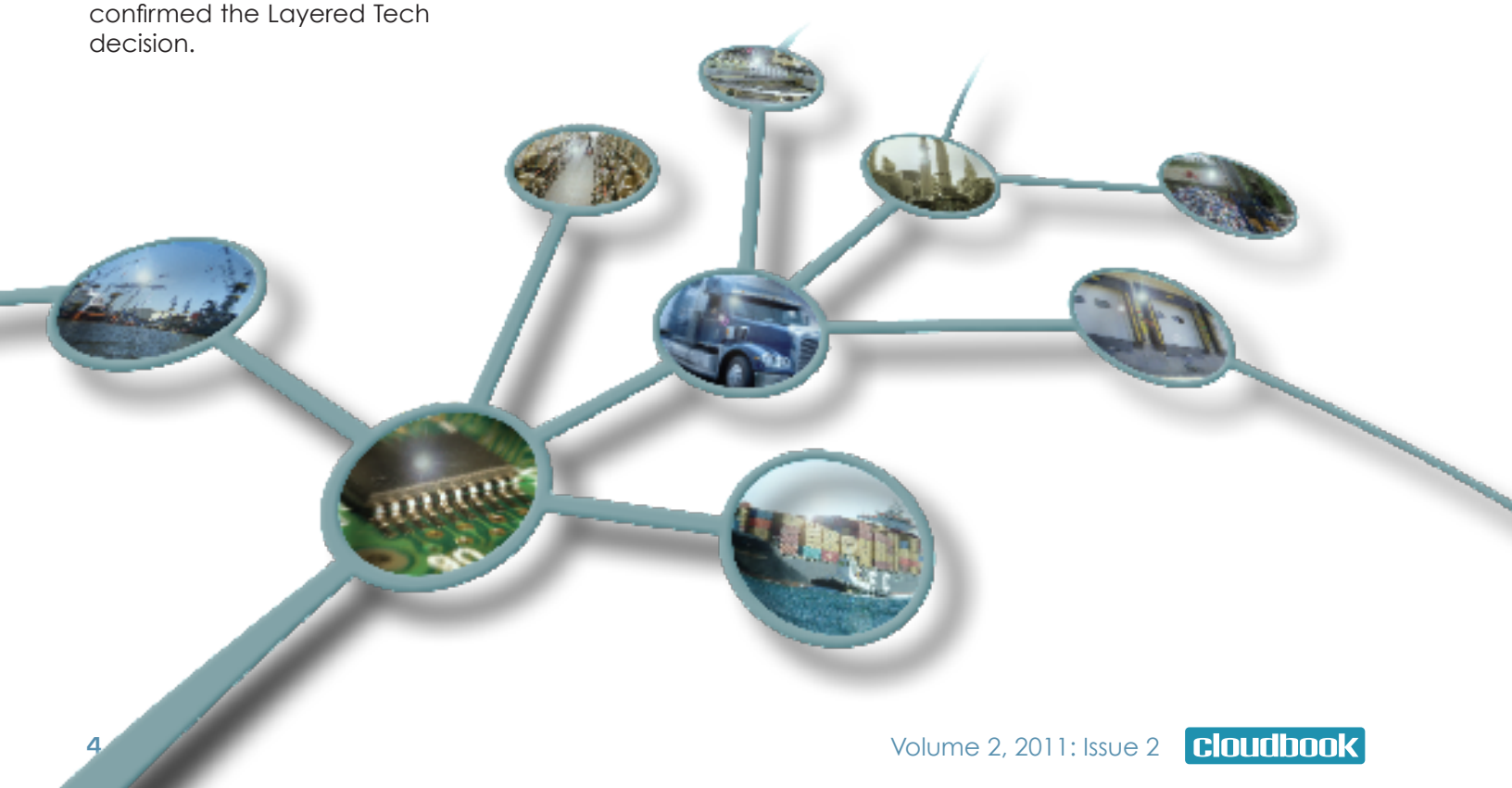
Shortly after Layered Tech was chosen, JDA announced the acquisition of I2. As it turned out, I2 was also in the process of finding a hosting provider for its on-demand offering.

Within a 24-hour period, the Burstorm team updated the RFP to include I2's requirements and presented the results back to JDA for consideration. After further deliberation, Joe and his team reconfirmed the Layered Tech decision.

Joseph King discusses Burstorm's role in assisting JDA to migrate to the cloud.

JDA'S UNIQUE REQUIREMENTS

JDA had a number of unique requirements. For instance, given the number of different platforms Joe and his team supported, they needed a provider flexible enough not only to run a more traditional cloud environment underneath a subset of the applications, but also allow additional AS/400 systems to be racked, stacked and



managed. In addition, for accounting reasons, JDA wanted to own and capitalize the equipment, versus deploying a more traditional cloud pay-as-you-go business model.

Layered Tech offered this flexibility. Says Joe, "They were flexible enough to allow us to purchase certain pieces, have it delivered and then took the responsibility of the build-out so we were able to begin to lay the software down to deliver the JDA Managed Services solution."

Thought leadership around the plan to move the users without interruptions was another value that Layered Tech brought to the JDA table. After all, JDA manages its customers' supply chains. As an example, many of JDA customers' websites have customers placing orders 24x7. As orders are placed, information is passed to manufacturers in a real-time environment. According to Joe, the Layered Tech service team spread around the world understands the various challenges faced in the migration. As a result, both teams work together on a regular basis to make the transition as smooth as possible for JDA's customers. Joe can't be telling a customer his site is down for a few days as his servers are being relocated.

Although it was not a huge part of the decision process, JDA was also impressed by Layered Tech's Dallas facility, which was formerly used to house gold bullion before it was shipped to Fort Knox. The historical flair is nice, but the high level of physical security is table stakes. Joe understands that customers often want to see where their data and systems will reside. Layered Tech's facility helps JDA impress its prospects en route to winning new business.

ANSWERING THE SHIFT

JDA is seeing a fundamental shift in its customers' needs. They've identified a challenge in their business. In response, they don't want to go through a lengthy sizing, blueprinting, and implementation endeavor. They don't want to acquire and implement software on their own hardware, then have to find the expertise in-house to maintain it all. Rather, they want a solution and they want that solution now.

Cloud technologies are making it easier to cater to this shift in customers' needs in a cost-effective manner. That said, few to no companies implement cloud soup-to-nuts; partners need to be brought into the equation. Given how cloud computing is one of the hottest fields these days, hundreds of companies are putting out their cloud shingle with varying level of execution ability. This makes finding the right set of suppliers tricky.

For JDA, choosing Burstorm as a specialist to help navigate the potential vendor landscape cut a lot of time out of the process. The Burstorm team brought an understanding of how to implement cloud, an unbiased view into who could implement what, and a proven methodology to quickly select partners who could meet a company's requirements. Put simply, Joe trusted that Brandon and Burstorm would have his back in navigating the selection process.

In addition, the Layered Tech team has become JDA's partner in migrating Managed Services to the cloud. Says Joe, "They've been able to understand what it is we're asking for today, what are our challenges, and more importantly where do we want to take this. Together, we'll overachieve our growth capabilities and plan well for our customers."

Two years after Joe joined JDA, his calendar is indeed busy. The JDA Managed Services is now the number one business priority for JDA. But Joe's calendar is not filled with fighting fires, but getting JDA customers educated on the value he and his team can provide. In fact, these days Joe even has time to get in an occasional round of golf. ■

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- To learn more about Joseph King, please click here or visit http://bit.ly/hXptBi.
- To learn more about the JDA private cloud, please click here or visit http://www.jda.com.
- To learn more about Layered Tech's cloud offering, please click here or visit http://www.layeredtech.com/cloud-computing/.
- To learn more about Burstorm, please click here or visit http://bit.ly/fNDDXI.

Table of Contents