NORTHWEST KIDNEY CENTERS MOVES TO CLOUD-FIRST

Strategic Implementation of SoftwareONE’s Azure Cloud Managed Services

Summary
Northwest Kidney Centers set their strategy on a cloud-first IT model. They had been challenged with escalating costs and IT staff resource constraints. After the initial move to Azure, their next challenge was to find reliable and effective ongoing support. With a trusted relationship already in place, SoftwareONE was a natural choice to incorporate sophisticated cloud support services. With the selection of SoftwareONE’s Managed Cloud Services, Northwest Kidney Centers gained sustained access to experienced people who understand cloud process and technology. They decreased costs and business risks while realizing the full strategic potential of cloud benefits to their organization.

About Northwest Kidney Centers
Northwest Kidney Centers is a not-for-profit, locally managed provider of kidney dialysis, public health education, and research into the causes and treatments of chronic kidney disease. Founded in Seattle in 1962, it is the world’s first dialysis organization. Among the 10 largest dialysis providers in the country, it is an influential model because of its high-quality services, deep community connections, and generous donor support.

Northwest Kidney Centers’ mission is “To promote the optimal health, quality of life and independence of people with kidney disease through patient care, education, and research. In fiscal 2019 Northwest Kidney Centers provided about 292,000 dialysis treatments for more than 1,800 patients.”

The Challenge
As an organization, Northwest Kidney Centers believes in research and innovation. They were pioneers in kidney dialysis. So, it is no surprise that they were open to being forward-looking and inventive when it comes to IT and moving toward a cloud-first approach across the enterprise.

Northwest Kidney Centers had been challenged with escalating costs and IT staff resource constraints in support of the management and growth of IT infrastructure. As they considered moving to a cloud model, their first challenge was inadequate internal resources and expertise to manage the transition. Their second challenge was how best to cover on-going care and management of the planned hybrid cloud environment.

“Our experience has been great throughout this process. There’s nothing we would do differently, and that speaks to the fact that, with SoftwareONE support, we did things right from the start.”
Andy Voorhies, IT Manager Northwest, Kidney Centers

“Our objective with managing the cloud environment was to use a partner; a professional resource capable of providing expertise and visibility. Turning to SoftwareONE was a natural progression. We already had a trusted relationship and were very confident they could do much more in cloud support than we could do ourselves with current constraints.”
Andy Voorhies, IT Manager, Northwest Kidney Centers
The Solution

Northwest Kidney Centers move to a hybrid cloud-first model was all about resources and expertise. They wanted internal staff focused on excellence in patient care. For cloud, technical, and ongoing support, they looked to outside resources. For example, beyond core Azure benefits, they valued Microsoft security expertise and advanced threat protection. Also, while the responsibility for managing HIPAA privacy rules remained internal, they could take advantage of Azure support for HIPAA compliance, including all the necessary safeguards documented to ensure HIPAA requirements are satisfied.

SoftwareONE had already been providing support and consulting expertise to manage software licensing for Northwest Kidney Centers. They helped sort through Microsoft license complexities to achieve the right mix and regularly advised on adjustments to match staff requirements. Extending this relationship to incorporate more sophisticated cloud managed services was a comfortable evolution.

Northwest Kidney Centers chose SoftwareONE’s Managed Cloud Services to gain sustained access to experienced people who understand cloud process and technology. They faced complex challenges. They wanted to have the support to position appropriate resources and tools that would assure decreased costs and business risks while realizing the full potential benefits of cloud to their organization. Turning to SoftwareONE’s Managed Cloud Services provided a strategic alternative.

While the objective was to modernize operations and realize the full benefits of the cloud, Voorhies wanted to deal with known resources. “We have individuals we talk with regularly,” said Voorhies. “Knowing we can rely on people familiar with our environment and our business objectives is important. And, when you have a critical event, you don’t want to be searching for help. That’s why we find the resources that SoftwareONE provides so valuable. They have the expertise. They know us, and they have the advantage of a strong Microsoft relationship they can leverage to get the job done.”

One example Voorhies offered was how some issues were discovered in their server environments during the initial audit, in part because there had been no standardized build process. SoftwareONE methodically evaluated how each server would be used in Azure and carefully created and documented a reusable recipe to create and manage servers for that purpose. The standardized process now helps in tracking and quickly addressing potential vulnerabilities.

“Not only has SoftwareONE delivered substantial benefits in the depth and breadth of capabilities and expertise, but also at a lower total cost of ownership.”

Andy Voorhies, IT Manager, Northwest Kidney Centers

Benefits and Outcomes

01 Avoiding the need for 2-3 additional staff positions
02 Reduced infrastructure and operational expenses
03 Substantial time savings for IT staff through simplified operations management
04 Established a flexible, reliable and expandable cloud-first model
05 Optimized security and simplified HIPAA compliance with Azure
06 Enabled IT excellence to support their healthcare mission