Axicom JDE 9.2 Upgrade
Standardisation and Data Centre Relocation Project

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

A change in ownership, and separation from the infrastructure of an overseas parent company, provided the opportunity for Axicom to update its trusted JDE Platform and take a significant step forward in digital transformation.

Andrew Fox, Head of IT at Axicom, was responsible for the successful delivery of the project and his team worked closely with the team at Ndevr to achieve the objectives of the project. Axicom sought three key deliverables:

1. Smooth transition to JDE V9.2

2. Standardisation of the System; and

3. Successful relocation of the Data Centre

A structured and considered approach, with a focus on planning for a successful transition meant that the Axicom and Ndevr teams were able to work together to successfully deliver all the project objectives on time and under budget.

KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives for the project included:

- JDE Application 9.0 upgraded to 9.2

- JDE Tools Release from 9.2.0.7 to 9.2.2.2

- Standardisation of JDE

- Upgrade of ancillary systems

- Synchronisation of credentials

- Relocation of IAAS infrastructure to the new data centre

BACKGROUND

Axicom is Australia's leading provider of independently owned wireless infrastructure. Axicom operate and manage a portfolio of approximately 2000 towers in Australia, substantially covering the Australian population. The core business is to provide Australia-wide tower and rooftop sites for wireless communication to support wireless services.

Originally part of a US based company known as Crown Castle, Axicom was formed in 2015 after Crown Castle sold its Australian operations. As a satisfied JDE and Ndevr customer, Axicom sought to bring their JDE system up to date in order to remain current for both the Application and Tools/Technology components. They also wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to standardise JDE by retiring modifications that made upgrades complex and clouded the identification of issues in the system.

A further requirement was implementing a suitable platform for the anticipated changes required in terms of the new AASB16 accounting standard that affects lease accounting that is core to the Axicom business. The new accounting standards for leasing will have a significant impact on Axicom, especially as they have over 2,000 leases impacted by the new standard.

In order to coincide with changes to IAAS hosting requirements, a relocation of the Data Centre was also included in the project specifications. While this would add effort, it would also provide the project with infrastructure and a smooth transition to the new Production system, in the location desired by Axicom.

IMPLEMENTATION

The delivery was phased in over eight and half months and commenced with the design and establishment of project infrastructure and the initial JDE upgrade and retrofit – providing a platform on which the standardisation was then performed and pre-UAT tested. A small amount of work was completed in the previous year to prepare for the project.

In preparation, works were split and sequenced to include the software update for real estate management as well as certain actions around the infrastructure and standardising what was already in place. This included removing custom or modified programs brought over from Crown Castle. The majority were related to the US requirements that had been inherited by Axicom.

The removal of the modifications had to be completed carefully as the former parent did not maintain or have documentation available around the changes. The extent and "depth" of the modifications was in some cases unknown and it was difficult to determine the impact on the business once they were removed.

While the business was concerned about what impact the changes would make, it also had a high degree of comfort working with Ndevr based on the delivery of a number of previous successful projects. The successful JDE Transition Project back in 2015 demonstrated Ndevr's ability to execute a high-pressure project. In 2016 Axicom completed a tools upgrade with Ndevr that was also successful.

Ndevr's experience working with clients with international experience was invaluable. The team was able to deep dive into the system and work through the necessary changes and ensure the system was compliant.

"This project epitomised teamwork and partnership. It is a testament to Ndevr, the commitment of our own finance function led by the strong sponsorship of our CFO and the endeavours of our own IT staff that they were able to execute such a complex set of project deliverables in parallel in such a tight time frame," said Andrew.

Andrew had an enormous amount of faith in the consulting capabilities of Ndevr staff.

"All the Ndevr staff have proven themselves to be absolute masters of their craft."

The previous 3 years in the company's history was described by Andrew as *"transformation on speed"* with the most recent JDE project being the 29th project to be delivered by the IT Department in 3 years.

In parallel, new infrastructure was designed and established at the new data centre, and the system transitioned from Project to new Production infrastructure. User Acceptance Testing completed the majority of the readiness for cutover to Live, which took place on schedule. The regular support model resumed after a short period of post Go Live support.

In the delivery of the project, the new infrastructure was established, systems transitioned to the new data centre and opportunities for improvements in server security were exploited.

Notably, some of the key deliverables and approaches were:

- JDE was upgraded to the latest Application and Tools releases

- Standardisation resulted in reductions of modified and custom program objects, uncluttering the pathway for the implementation of software and processes for Lessee Accounting:
  - o 84% reduction of modified standard applications, UBEs, business functions
  - o 77% reduction of custom applications, UBEs, business functions, etc

- A single final Acceptance Test phase encompassed multiple application and infrastructure aspects so Axicom didn't have to go through this phase multiple times. There were tests conducted during various stages of the project but everything then converged into the single acceptance test covering all the parts of the application as well as the infrastructure and the networking that enabled Axicom to give the approval to Go Live.

- Synchronised credentials providing improved security and a simpler process for JDE users

- A smooth transition with minimal business impact

- The project also came in on time and on budget

BENEFITS

Andrew is keen to take advantage of the new tools that come with the JDE 9.2 software.

- Continuous Innovation Delivery Model - Oracle will deliver all new functionality to JD Edwards products as updates to the existing release. Axicom will be able to download smaller updates more frequently in order to remain code-current. Implementation will be facilitated using Ndevr's Continuously Code Current (CCC) service.

- Mobility - JD Edwards 9.2 offers a wide range of mobility applications across all modules.

- Improved user Experience - JD Edwards 9.2 offers a wide range of enhancements to the user interface.

- Using the JD Edwards Orchestrator, internal or external triggers can be used to automatically alert appropriate personnel to a situation, or even to automatically initiate a process in JD Edwards.

- JD Edwards 9.2 Integration Framework enables simpler interfacing to the Internet of Things (equipment, equipment monitors, mobile applications, etc.) using the JD Edwards Orchestrator.

- JD Edwards 9.2 enables simple interface to cloud applications, enabling customers to take advantage of complementary cloud offerings, where appropriate, such as Sales Cloud and Planning and Budgeting Cloud Service.

- The new 9.2 software now positions the business to accept the new accounting standards software.

The Axicom finance department is also keen to complete works on the accounting standards and move onto implementing new ideas around process improvement and simplification to the business. Because finance was so involved in the JDE project, they saw how the system worked and now have a greater understanding of how components interact and processes can be improved. This has started to stimulate conversations about process improvement – an exciting step forward for the organisation.

The move to 9.2 also means that Axicom will be able to take advantage of the Ndevr and JDE continuous delivery model. Ongoing updates and upgrades as part of the workflow and support package mean that Axicom will never have to do this type of major upgrade again. The business knows it can do everything cheaper, faster and easier with more certainty because of the JDE 9.2 platform they now have in place.

While Axicom is a small company with around 200 people, the business manages billions of dollars in assets. With a small team managing JDE, they suffer from the greater risk of single person loss.

"If key personnel left in the last couple of years there would have been a lot of knowledge walking out the door. Today we have a system that means if we lose a critical member of staff, we can replace this person more easily and effectively," said Andrew.

There is sometimes a debate in the market that running a Tier 1 ERP system isn't necessarily cost-effective but given the effectiveness of JDE, Axicom believes it brings enormous value.

"We are well positioned with JDE, and a terrific partner in Ndevr. JDE in a way is the iceberg. 90% is not apparent to the rest of the organisation but it is the foundation of our business and from it, everything else flows,"
said Andrew.

NDEVR

When Axicom does its vendor evaluations, Ndevr stands out as an example for everyone else. This relates to their skills, communication, work ethic and overall professionalism. Ndevr is considered the benchmark for Axicom.

"Ndevr is a partner who is fundamentally different from 90% of the supplier relationships you are going to have. I don't view them differently from the rest of my staff. There is an honest and openness to the communication and a real desire to fulfil a common goal," said Andrew.

CONCLUSION

While this was the biggest IT project for the Axicom company in 2018, it only affected the CFO and his teams during implementation.

"Had it gone badly it would have touched every person across the organisation. But because it went well, it was my biggest project that nobody knew about. That's a mark of success. If the business didn't know you did something truly transformational, that could have brought the company to its knees, then you have been successful," said Andrew.

Ultimately, the smooth Go-Live transition that Ndevr had promised was realised.

"In a 20-year career doing transformation, this is my unicorn. This was a complex project that was multi-faceted and with many objectives. The teamwork between Axicom, Ndevr and hosting partner SAS IT who look after the infrastructure and the data centre was outstanding. You just don't do something this big and not have operational impact. It is just unknown. We got the right process and product, and we got the right partners in Ndevr & SAS IT. Coming in on time and budget is always good too, " said Andrew.

Axicom is now looking forward to the business enjoying the many benefits of J DE 9.2.

NDEVR

Contact Ndevr today to discuss taking the next step in your digital transformation.